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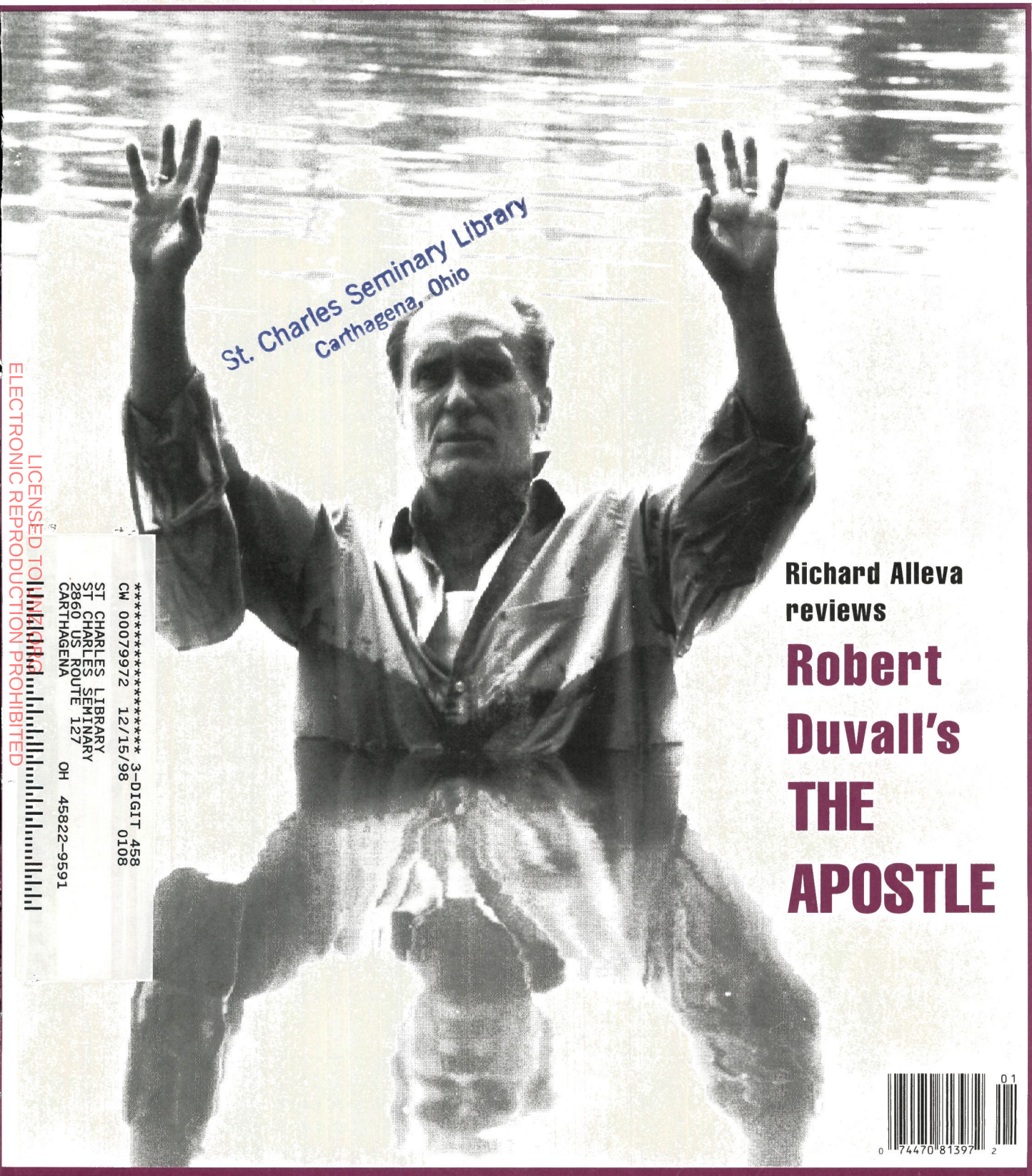

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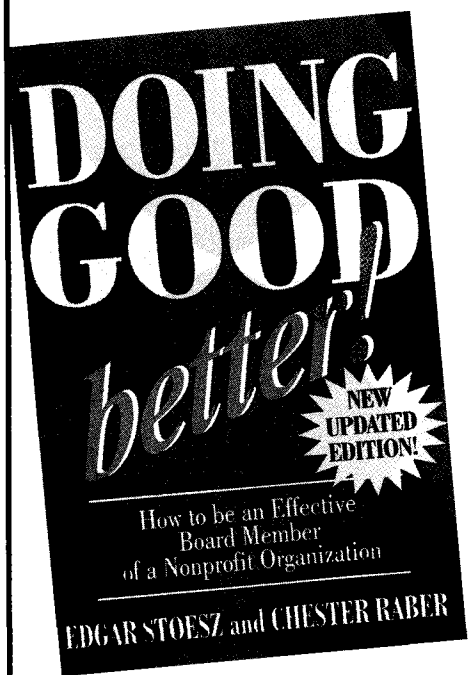

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COMMONWEAL

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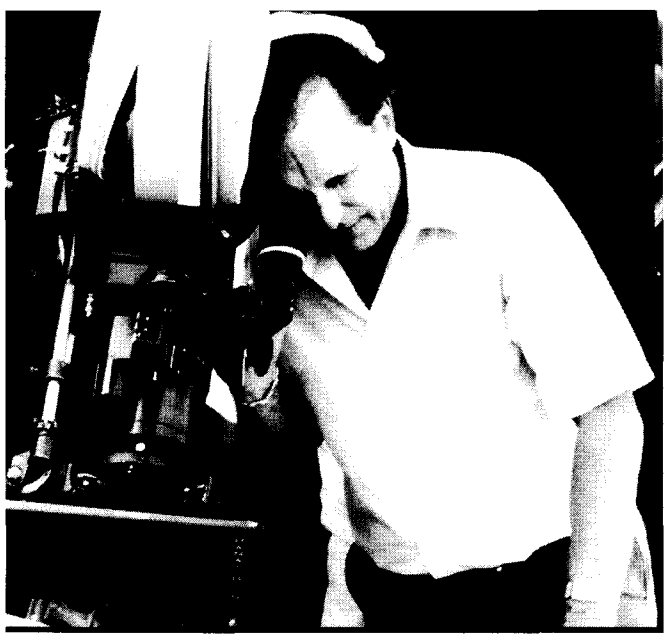

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To the Editors

No rightwinger, He!

Growing understanding and sensitivity have led many people to become more accepting of racial minorities, those with handicaps, and others too long ignored or ridiculed. It was heartening to see this trend extended in the cartoon on page 24 of your December 5, 1997 issue: It shows God as a left-hander.

For millennia, left-handedness has been connected with Satan, evil, and exclusion from polite society (*see* the etymology of such words as "sinister" and "gauche"). As a lifelong member of the left-handed minority, I was delighted by this recognition that the Creator is a southpaw.

JAMES BREIG
Albany, N.Y.

The writer is editor of the Evangelist, *newspaper of the Albany diocese.*

Nationalism lives

Did Rush Limbaugh write your editorial on the Iraqi crisis [December 5, 1997]? Sorry, he is much more moderate. So are, among others, Pat Buchanan and John McLaughlin, who set aside their customary jingoism at the sight of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children dead because of the sanctions; both have used the word "genocide" to describe what the U.S.-inspired sanctions are doing to the Iraqi people.

No such compunction appears in your editorial. You uncritically accept the State Department line on the sanctions, that they are motivated solely by Saddam's "determination to reconstitute his military machine." You have conveniently forgotten that the current crisis was inspired by two speeches, one by Bill Clinton and one by Madeleine Albright, stating that regardless of how faithfully Iraq were to abide by UN resolutions, the sanctions would remain as long as Saddam Hussein stayed in power. In other words, the lives of Iraqi civilians are of less consequence than the perceived self-interest of the United States.

Since arriving in the United States, I have been astounded at the degree to which American Christians, be they left or right or middle of the road, are willing to let nationalistic passions of the crudest kind, rather than gospel values, govern their view of world affairs.

Evidently, the ugly American is alive and well in the editorial room of *Commonweal*. Please cancel my subscription immediately.

DECLAN DEANE, S.J.
Moraga, Calif.

The editors reply:

Rather than being drive by crude nationalistic passions, the American people—including those Father Deane cites—give little evidence of caring deeply about Iraq. Isolationism and indifference are alive and well in the United States.

We think preventing a known mass-murderer from once again acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction has something to do with gospel values. The effect of the sanctions on the Iraqi people raises a true moral quandary. But at this time we continue to find sanctions preferable to either taking military action against Iraq or allowing Saddam Hussein to declare himself free of the weapons the UN team thinks he is hiding.

Deane's reading of the facts does not square with ours. The recent crisis was not instigated by the United States, but by Hussein's expulsion of the UN weapons inspectors and by his continuing unwillingness to abide by the UN's resolutions concerning the destruction of his nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. Moreover, statements by Clinton and Albright have not been as one-dimensional as Deane suggests, but often contradictory and ambiguous. That's how diplomacy works. It is our impression that Iraq's compliance with UN resolutions, not the removal of Saddam Hussein, would result in the lifting of economic sanctions—that, at least, is the position we support. Deane also needs to be reminded that until recently Hussein has refused to accept greater humanitarian relief for the Iraqi people.

Finally, may we suggest that as a new arrival to these shores, Father Deane listen to a bit more of the national discussion on Iraq—the war, the sanctions, and Hussein—before jumping to conclusions. (Reading *Commonweal* is one way to do that.)

Put him on the Web

I have a suggestion about Robert Ostermann's article ["A Soldier's Legacy"] in the issue of December 5. Why not post the article on your website? It makes good reading for leaders of soldiers (from commander-in-chief to sergeant) and, for that matter, for the rest of us.

MATT PERETIN
Blue Bell, Pa.

From the editors: It shall be done.

A college's mission

Writing about Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, among others

(Continued on page 28)

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Dollar diplomacy

The world carefully gauges the ups and downs of the stock market, recalculates the value of the Korean won, and frets about continuing recession in Japan. At the same time, slaughter goes on in Rwanda; the fractious Bosnians busily unravel international efforts to repair their social fabric; and the Middle East simmers over the Oslo Accords, the state of near-war with Iraq, and the ambiguous re-emergence of Iran.

When the Soviet Empire collapsed and with it cold-war diplomacy, who expected U.S. foreign policy would be monopolized by trade issues or high-wire rescues of sinking economies? Who could have foreseen the extent to which the Treasury Department would eclipse the State Department in the intricate business of managing U.S. relations with other nations, or that the secretary of the treasury would become the United States' foremost foreign-policy troubleshooter?

But business is business, and the travails of capitalism wonderfully focus the mind. If events in Korea follow the scenario of the U.S. rescue of the Mexican economy, investment bankers will heave a sigh of relief. And so will many ordinary Americans who have come to accept that the stability of their jobs, the value of their pensions, and the performance of the U.S. economy are increasingly exposed to the ups and downs of the global economy—that is, to what happens in Korea, Thailand, Mexico, Japan. Interdependence comes in many forms and carries many responsibilities; knowing the value of the Korean won is part of that.

But what of Rwanda? Bosnia? South Africa? Zimbabwe? And many other nations in the throes of political and cultural upheaval? Don't their troubled situations merit the attention of policy makers and the American people?

The anxiety over Korea is understandable—economic stability is perforce a necessary focus of U.S. foreign policy. But is that it? Is the United States simply to become lender of last resort, "the invisible hand" steadying unregulated markets and compensating for the buccaneering spirit of global investors, including many of its own citizens?

The classic tasks of foreign policy—information gathering, analysis, negotiation—still must be carried on. What about NATO? Have we fully and frankly engaged our European partners in discussions of military strategy and funding as the alliance expands eastward? Are Russia and its myriad levels of complicated politics receiving the sustained attention they deserve? What about the future of South Africa as Nelson Mandela steps back from center stage? Or developments in Central Asia? Turkey? Algeria?

Of course, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is very visible, and very active, almost hyperactive. Her continuing negotiations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority may yet achieve a kind of stability on the West Bank. Her travels—her very presence in Rwanda, for example—draw attention to the precarious state of peace in many parts of the world. But these are specimens of personal diplomacy; a necessary but not sufficient component of policy making. As forceful as she appears to be, and as successful as she may prove to be (or not), Albright can't do everything. She needs direction and support from the president and from

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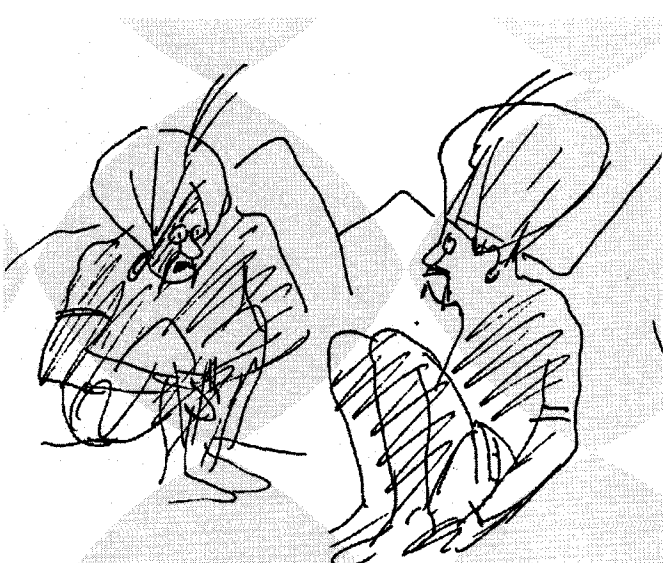
Congress. And the rest of us seek a reasonably clear idea of our country's goals and guidelines *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world.

The cold war supplied a kind of discipline, a set of convictions about who conducted foreign policy and how. That discipline and those convictions are gone for good. Now we need leaders capable of seeing and shaping policy at many different levels in very ambiguous situations. We seem to be managing at the economic level, but at the political level there is drift and indecision. President Bill Clinton never promised to be a foreign-policy president, a promise he has kept. But still—he needs a policy. His Christmas visit to Bosnia was an opportunity both to state policy and shape opinion. But the visit seemed strictly *pro forma*, impressing neither U.S. soldiers nor Bosnian leaders. It was a missed opportunity to clarify for the American people why those troops are going to be there for some time to come—because peacemaking is a long and arduous undertaking.

Back in Washington, it's all checks and no balances. The Congress, specifically Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has effectively usurped the president's prerogative to name ambassadors and to deal with international bodies. U.S. relations with the United Nation are tense and difficult because of congressional refusal to pay our long-delayed dues. A world in ever greater need of cooperation and collaboration can ill-afford to have the U.S. Congress thumbing its nose at the one body that can, at least, deliberate about genocide; that helps foster economic cooperation; and that, in extreme cases, actually supports the Herculean task of peacemaking.

No one could have predicted the aftermath of the cold war. Even so, it is dismaying that dollar diplomacy garners the attention of the best minds in Washington and sets the priorities for our policy on everything else. A broader vision is needed.



"Remember the good old days of community-oriented, antimaterialist wishes?"

Continuing the Conversation

Bah, Humbug: Were we too tough (December 19, 1997) on the Vatican's recent document "Some Questions Regarding Collaboration of Nonordained Faithful in Priests' Sacred Ministry"? Not as tough as Bishop Reinhold Stecher of Innsbruck, Austria. In a letter dated the last Sunday of the liturgical year, he objected to: The instruction's failure to see the Eucharist as necessary for the well-being of local communities; its refusal to see the priesthood as "an office of serving and not an exercise in sacred narcissism"; and its "tendency to value human rules...more highly than the divine commission." Bishop Stecher also criticizes the pope's refusal to consider reconciliation with men who have left the priesthood, making the teachings of Jesus subordinate to "ecclesiastic administrative practices," all of which, he says, ends in undermining papal authority. The "Instruction" was signed by the heads of eight Vatican offices, including Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. To this squadron of ecclesiastical combatants, Bishop Stecher seems to respond by concluding: "For the sake of the church it must not be that the very top is concerned with every splinter at the base, but doesn't see the beam in its own eye." The instruction will be found in *Origins*, November 27, 1997; a full translation of Bishop Stecher's letter by Ingrid Shafer will be found at: http:astro.temple.edu/~arcc/stecher2.htm.

Moved In: We think we're finally settled in our new offices, and have decided to do something far-out for a bunch of workaholic introverts. We're having an office-warming on Tuesday, February 3, 1998 from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. Please come by to say hello and, if you were one of the many generous people who contributed to our "moving fund," to accept our thanks. RSVP: 212-662-4200 or e-mail: commonweal@msn.com.

Straw into Gold? Attentive readers will notice that we are not running an ad in this issue for a business manager. Why is that? After chatting with and checking references for several enthusiastic candidates, we have at long last hired Gregory Wilpert, who will have begun work by the time this issue is in your hands. Gregory's resumé announces that he is a "results-oriented coordinator and problem-solver with extensive experience in the political nonprofit sector and academia." Currently, he's teaching sociology at the College of Mount Saint Vincent in the Bronx; until recently he was also an administrator with the trade art department of Simon & Schuster. Earlier he managed the New York chapter of CISPES (Committee in Support of the People of El Salvador). He's computer-literate, commands several languages, has done press relations, fundraising, office management, etc. And, after looking over our books, reader surveys, and promotion literature, he came for his second interview equipped with wise observations and good ideas. We're happy. We shall overcome.

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E.J. DIONNE, Jr.

THE IMF & ITS CRITICS

Don't fire the fire department

If your neighbor's house is burning down, do you begrudge the fire department spending your tax dollars to put out the fire—even if your neighbor caused the fire himself by throwing a cigarette in a trash can?

Odds are you don't mind at all, perhaps because your neighbor is your friend, and certainly because you don't want the fire to spread to your property.

Keep this analogy in mind in the coming months. Unfortunately, we will be hearing a lot about the International Monetary Fund and its plans to bail out various economies around the globe. It's part of the world economy's fire department, trying to stop panics and economic catastrophes before they engulf us all.

Right now, South Korea faces a mess and the IMF has already gotten pledges of more than $55 billion to help keep the place afloat. It's not at all clear if that will be enough, or if the bailout will work. There's a good chance of other bailouts—in Brazil, perhaps, and elsewhere in Asia.

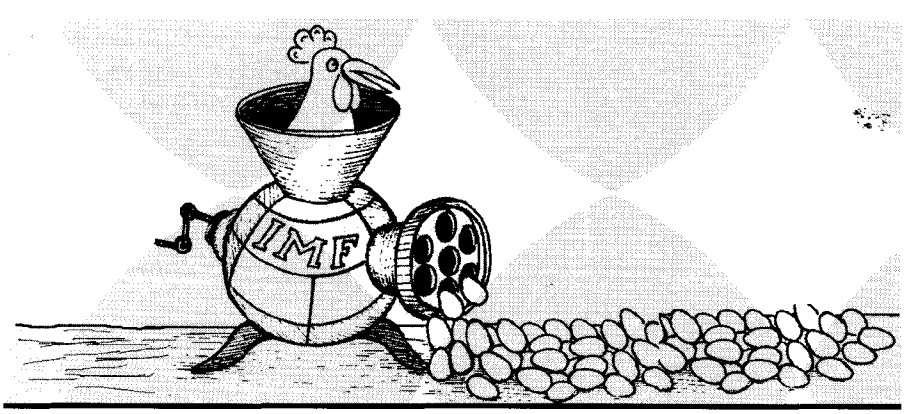
Attacks on the IMF are common these days, and they'll get louder as it's forced to do more bailing. The criticisms come from all over the political map. Nationalists such as Pat Buchanan simply don't like the idea of spending American money to prop up foreign economies. They worry that the IMF violates the sovereignty of nations. Libertarian-minded conservatives don't like any international body ever messing with the workings of the free market.

Some on the left see the IMF as the agent of international banks and big capitalists, as do some of Buchanan's followers. And a fair number of economists, left, right, and center, worry that the IMF imposes austerity plans that actually slow economic recovery.

There's something to every single one of these criticisms. The IMF does operate against national sovereignty—it dictates policies to countries that borrow its money. Yes, the United States puts some of our money at risk. There is a "moral hazard" problem, as economists call it, when governments and investors know they'll be bailed out if they get in trouble. The IMF thus does interfere with the pure operation of the market.

It's entirely true that the IMF has more of a Wall Street than a Main Street mentality. It's more concerned with keeping big financial institutions from collapsing than with saving mom and pop stores. And its heavy emphasis on austerity may well slow economic recovery in some places—and austerity tends to be borne most heavily by people at the bottom.

But if the IMF and its sister economic institutions didn't exist, we'd create something like them. The big lessons of the global catastrophe of the Great Depression and the global economic success that followed World War II are (1) it's better to have some checks and balances on the free market than to let it fly off into panics, bank runs, and ruin; and (2) you can't have economic growth, in your own country or around the world, without international rules and institutions.



The genius of the architects of the economic arrangements built during Harry Truman's administration after World War II is that they understood these things. They wanted stability, growth, and no more cataclysms. With all the ups and downs of the last fifty years, that's what they bequeathed us.

It's true that the world is very different now with the rapid industrialization of Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. It's also true that when Dr. IMF prescribes an excess of austerity, it can keep the patients it's trying to save sick for longer than they have to be. And the IMF has shown, at best, sporadic concern for democracy, human rights, and labor rights.

But all these are arguments for fixing the IMF, not junking it. There are moves in Congress to push the IMF to condition loans not only to economic performance but also to respect for basic democratic rights. When governments embark on austerity programs, it's especially important that the most vulnerable people on the farms and in the factories have a chance to voice their grievances and push for a fairer apportionment of the pain. Supporters of global institutions take note: opposition to them will grow if taxpayers see their dollars used regularly to prop up oligarchies and dictatorships.

As for the nationalists Buchanan courts, they might consider taking pride in the United States' leadership in creating institutions such as the IMF, which may not have solved all economic problems but have done fairly well in resisting the worst catastrophes. That isn't globaloney. It's an amazing achievement. □

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ABIGAIL McCARTHY

ACTIVE DUTY

Mrs. Boggs goes to the Vatican

As everyone knows, the political atmosphere in Washington has been extremely partisan and rancorous the past few years. It was at once surprising and satisfying, therefore, when, for a few weeks this past November, all factions seemed to come together in a spate of approval of, and a series of celebrations of, a presidential appointment—that of the Honorable Corinne Claiborne Boggs as ambassador to the Holy See. The confirmation hearing of Mrs. Boggs was a veritable love-in with senators from both sides of the aisle singing her praises.

The hearing was followed by luncheons and dinners honoring the woman everyone calls "Lindy," certainly one of the most beloved officials in recent Washington history. The guests at her thronged swearing-in ceremony were a wonderful mélange of people from her native state, old friends and colleagues, long-time Washington "names" (Katherine Graham and Millie [Mrs. "Tip"] O'Neill, Linda Johnson Robb and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, and their husbands), five cardinals, the presidents of Washington universities and of Tulane (where she had an office when she retired from Congress), members of the Jewish community, Boggs children and grandchildren—one could go on and on. No one present doubted that Lindy Boggs, comely and quick as ever at eighty-one, would be an effective ambassador. Her diplomatic skills, her leadership qualities, and her considerable charm have been evident throughout her years in Washington.

From the time Mrs. Boggs came to town as the wife and capable political partner of Congressman Hale Boggs (later long-time Democratic majority leader of the House), she was a presence for the good on the town's social and volunteer scene. For example, when, at different times, she was president of the Congressional Club and of the Women's National Democratic Club, she saw to it that each group was integrated with no loss of membership. The same qualities made her an outstanding legislator when she was elected to the House after her husband's death. She served for nine terms. As the first woman appointed to the Vatican by the U.S., she has behind her a history of "firsts"—among others, first woman from Louisiana to be elected to Congress and first woman to chair a Democratic national convention.

The expression of good feeling about Boggs's appointment was all the more surprising if you recall the uproar when it was first suggested by President Harry Truman that the United States have a representative at the Vatican at all, let alone a woman who was an observant Catholic. Protestant and Jewish organizations were up in arms. Civil libertarians mounted protests. Truman solved the matter by appointing Myron Taylor, a non-Catholic, as his personal representative. It was not until 1984, when President Ronald Reagan upgraded William Wilson, his special envoy, to the rank of ambassador, that the post was accepted as part of the diplomatic service.

The official political reason for having a representative at the Vatican—especially during the cold war—was that the Vatican was a splendid listening post, particularly for gathering information from Eastern Europe. That was, and is, a practical and factual reason. But a letter from President Truman [October 2, 1947] to his wife Bess indicates that more idealistic reasons were in play and probably have been in play ever since:

> Had Myron Taylor in, too. Looks as if he and I may get the morals of the world on our side. We are talking to the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop at the head of the Lutheran church, the metropolitan of the Greek church at Istanbul, and the pope. I may send him to see the top Buddhist and the Grand Lama of Tibet. If I can mobilize the people who believe in a moral world against the Bolshevik materialists, who believe as Henry Wallace does—that the end justifies the means—we can win this fight.

Now fifty years later, Ambassador Boggs takes the *raison d'être* of her new

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office very seriously. Even before her swearing-in, she was already at work. She took a flying trip to Europe to attend a special meeting of U.S. envoys before coming back to the briefings and language preparation at the State Department. She has this to say about the purpose of the office she now holds: "Of course the Vatican is still a great listening post. There are many countries accredited to the Holy See, and not all of them have relations with the United States. But more important are the global goals and the global issues that are of equal concern to us and to the Holy See—lasting peace, science used for the betterment of mankind, solutions to the critical issues posed by refugee problems, global warming, the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, human rights, the illegal drug trade. We know that the widespread work of the church in almost every part of the world gives the Vatican a unique perspective on these things. We know how earnestly the Holy Father seeks answers day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month. It will be instructive to observe and cooperate with this process and to watch the preparations for what he calls the 'Great Jubilee Year—the year 2000.'"

In all the celebrations before Ambassador Boggs took off for Rome, there was an interesting subtext—the acknowledgment of the strengthening factor of a seldom-recognized community in Washington—the skein of interconnections and relationships of the many families who have come here for public service of one kind or another. At her swearing-in by Vice-President Albert Gore, Jr., Lindy Boggs alluded humorously to a picture of herself holding him—she hoped lovingly—when he was only four. His father had served with her husband in the House and the families were close. In a toast at another event, Linda Johnson Robb, daughter of the president, who has known Boggs since she herself was a little girl, and whose husband now serves in the Senate, called the ambassador her "other mother." This shadow community gives Washington a small-town feel and is supportive to its emissaries.

Lindy Boggs's son-in-law, journalist Steven Roberts, husband of ABC anchor Cokie (Boggs) Roberts, says, "I wish every member of the media had the kind of relationship to a political family that I enjoy. They would know more about the sacrifices and rewards of political life. It would do a lot to combat the pervasive culture of cynicism—cynicism that runs deep in the mind of the general public and is fed by the concentration of the media on scandals and the public's appetite for them. To me, politician is not a dirty world and public service is a noble calling.

"Unfortunately, the whole idea of public service has been devalued and diminished in this country by what a friend of mine calls the 'cynicism industry,' and something precious has been lost. Public office is *not* the refuge of scoundrels. Most politicians seek office to serve—as Hale and Lindy did—not to satisfy their egos or to fatten their wallets. My wife and I live in the house Hale and Lindy occupied. The phone sometimes still rings with calls from people seeking help, the help they were sure they would get from their representatives."

It is from such a community of public service that Ambassador Boggs came and a surety that she will continue to serve and find in service her reward. □

Joseph D. Policano

LETTER FROM IRAN

Thaw beneath the surface

Fifteen days in Iran showed me that Iranians obey a new commandment: "Fear thy neighbor"—and with reason. A jealous or vengeful neighbor can have them thrown in jail if they drink alcohol, host a party mingling men and women, own a TV dish, possess anticlerical literature, or hold hands with a fiancée in public. If that neighbor/enemy suspects that a private home is being used for romantic liaisons, the cops will surely come calling. Often, however, affluent young Iranians can skirt these regulations; they may stage parties at home featuring Western music, co-ed dancing, perhaps some liquor or (more common now) some drugs, by slipping a bribe to the police.

In this police state, it surprised me that I was able to travel freely and that many Iranians approached me to chat. When they learned that I was an American (they expected a European), it was their turn to be surprised. One said to his friend, "Can you imagine this? An American here by himself! They are allowing Americans here!"

But over the entrance to the government-owned hotel where I stayed in Shiraz was a sign with three-foot-high letters proclaiming, "Down with U.S.A." (the hotel staff seemed embarrassed by it). Incongruously, twenty feet from the sign Iranian Airlines proudly displayed a huge model of one of its sleek jumbo jets—a Boeing 747. And the model was only a few feet from a sign giving the rates for the hotel—in U.S. dollars.

Even in a brief visit, it was evident that Iran is changing. Officially classed by Washington as a rogue nation that supports terrorism, Iran is taking steps to move back into the community of nations. The pressure to change is coming from within, generated by an economy that in 1996 saw prices rise as much as 50 percent (1997's has been a more manageable 10 percent), while job opportunities shrank. I met a dozen or more college graduates who had taken jobs as stock boys in markets, or as clerks, waiters, and bus boys—and were happy to have them.

The election of Seyed Mohammed Khatami to the presidency last year certified the yearning for change. Though himself a mullah, as minister of culture Khatami had gained a reputation as an open-minded intellectual. He got nearly 75 percent of the vote, swamping four conservative opponents; much of that margin could be attributed to his popu-

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larity with women. As president he has continued to curry favor by getting out in the street and "pressing the flesh," something no previous president had done, while making unannounced visits (though the media are always there) to schools, hospitals, and public works.

Under Iranian law, Khatami could become a puppet, since the entire elected government can be dismissed by the ruling council of mullahs, a self-perpetuating body of men charged with insuring that Iranian laws conform to Islam. Constitutionally, true power rests with the Vali-e Faqih, or Supreme Leader, now Ayatollah Ali Khameini. But, just as our own Supreme Court takes note of election returns, in today's climate the ruling mullahs presumably know that they would risk a bloody uprising if they dared to bring down the elected government.

The Iranians I met were bristling under the oppression that the mullahs have imposed on them for the past twenty years. Once a cosmopolitan city—too cosmopolitan, perhaps, since its vices contributed substantially to the Shah's overthrow—Tehran is now a boring place, with virtually no cultural life, and certainly no "night life." Traffic is congested, the air is polluted, and the police are everywhere.

I had substantive conversations with about thirty Iranian men (a foreigner approaches an Iranian woman at his peril). Of these, all but one (of whom more below) deplored the state of the economy and blamed the mullahs for mismanagement and corruption. They spoke favorably of the United States. Some of the older men who had worked for American companies in the Shah's time missed the money they had earned but did not regret the Islamic revolution; Muslims had been shocked by the excesses of the Shah's "Americanization" program, which introduced prostitution and other vices on a grand scale into the country. None of the men I spoke with believed that Iran sponsors terrorist acts against the U.S. or any Western country, but all, perhaps by rote, supported Hezbollah's struggle against Israel's control of southern Lebanon.

An exception to this seeming consensus was Mojtaba (his first name), a fortyish lawyer in Shiraz (a graduate of Atlanta's Emory University), introduced to me by my guide when I asked him to find someone who would support the mullahs. On Israeli-Palestinian affairs, he repeated what I came to recognize as the party line: American policy is 101 percent in favor of Israel and is dictated by rich American Jews; Israel has the right to exist but is an imperialist nation that seeks to dominate first Palestine, then Jordan, and soon the entire Middle East.

I asked him whether Iran as a theocratic state is not a throwback to a different era. Speaking in flawless English (and giving an answer I suspect he has used many times), he said, "We are rigid in our beliefs and practices and many people criticize us for this, especially those in the West and certainly you Americans. But we don't murder a million babies a year through abortions; we don't have tens of thousands of unmarried teen-age mothers; we don't have shelters for battered women because we don't have battered women. If a wife is ever hit by her husband it is her family who punishes him and then if there is anything left of him we throw him in jail. We don't have a drug problem [not quite true, according to others in Iran]; we don't have homosexual marriages; we don't have abused children or unsafe schools; we don't have an AIDS epidemic; we don't have any of the social problems that are destroying your society. Think about that, please, and tell me if your right to dance and drink alcohol or look at women half-naked or read political commentary in a press that is as self-censored and self-limiting as any in the world compensates for the sicknesses that are killing your country."

I didn't meet anyone else like Mojtaba. While I have no doubt that Iran is slowly moving toward the West and certainly will find total acceptance by Europe within a few years (and perhaps by America after that), its deep strain of religious fundamentalism and spiritualism can never be ignored. Every Tuesday as few as 1,000 or as many as 50,000 believers come to the Jamkaran mosque near Qum to await the return of their Imam Sahib-e-Zahum, who they know is traveling throughout the world and whose return to the mosque will signal a renewed life for all those present. He left more than 1,000 years ago. □

Joseph D. Policano *has worked and traveled extensively in the developing world. His most recent article for* Commonweal *was a report from Cuba (September 8, 1995).*

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Thomas Garofalo

LETTER FROM CUBA

Getting ready for the pope

Knowledge among the Cuban people of this month's papal visit can be attributed almost entirely to the church's own door-to-door campaign, conducted in all ten dioceses by volunteer laypeople and religious. As Bishop Jose Siro Gonzalez of Pinar del Rio noted during my recent visit to Cuba: "I can say, without childish enthusiasm or Cuban vanity, that there is tremendous hope among the people for the visit of the Holy Father." The question remains: hope for what?

According to one church official "the Cuban people today can be described in three words: uprooted, discouraged, and fragile." Thus, the Cuban bishops' November 1997 pastoral letter, "Let Us Give Each Other Fraternal Peace," encouraged Cubans to expect the Holy Father with hopeful hearts: "The pope comes to announce to today's Cuban the truth about Jesus Christ and the human person, so that we might have hope."

In the past, the Cuban government systematically persecuted Catholics, denying them access to education and jobs, and even subjecting them to so-called reeducation programs. Recently, the government has dramatically improved its treatment of religious believers. As a result, church officials are not eager to criticize the current system publicly. In fact, they are more likely to criticize the customary journalistic focus on conflict, which often sets church authority off against the state. They don't wish to jeopardize progress, thus their reticence with the media.

The pope's visit will focus on the evangelization of a people who have long stood out in Latin America for their lack of formal religious devotion. Anthony Trollope, traveling in the country in 1859, remarked that "Roman Catholic worship is at a lower ebb in Cuba than almost anywhere else." Today, officials seem to face the future with pragmatism, accepting the fact that while they cannot operate with complete freedom, they have patience that some day they will.

"There is a moral and ethical force behind the church that is fundamental in today's efforts," another Catholic official told me. "We feel very deeply that our mission is good. What we don't achieve today we will achieve tomorrow." But even if the government were to become more welcoming, the island's roughly 240 priests and 400 nuns would have a hard time reaching its 11 million inhabitants. "Many of the people who come to ask intercessions of the Virgin of Charity do not know Christ," said Father Jorge Palma, pastor of the sanctuary of Cuba's patron saint. The shrine is located in the mining village of Cobre, a few miles from Santiago de Cuba, the capital of the province of Santiago. This eastern end of the island is poorer and less developed than the rest of Cuba, a fact that is reflected, according to Palma, in the people's faith experience. "The population here is probably only about 10 percent Christian," another priest told me, "and only 1 percent of the people actually practice....People come to Mass, but they know little about Catholicism."

Palma, nonetheless, was preparing his congregation for the pope's visit. Showing his visitors several boxes of literature that volunteer layworkers would be distributing house to house, he explained that state limits on church activities made the work more difficult. "Money isn't the problem," he said. "The problem is that the government won't allow us to purchase the things we need: paper, printing equipment."

Another pastor, a Colombian priest who wished to remain anonymous, agreed. "We are faced with a state that wants to limit our ability to preach and celebrate our faith. For many, their faith is a faith of fear. It is silent, anonymous. These people are uprooted." Asked to compare the predicament of the church in Cuba to that of his home country, Colombia, where political murders reached more than thirty thousand in the last ten years, he said, "This is much more difficult. If it were easy, we wouldn't be here."

So, while church officials in Cuba maintain that the government has not been especially repressive recently, it is clear that the church has no choice but to steadily press for greater freedom to fulfill its mission. "The right to worship is not freedom of religion," Havana's Cardinal Ortega has said. "It is only one aspect of that freedom."

Yet the church's public caution in criticizing the government reveals a strong desire not to sour the current constructive dialogue. And it seems to be working: In November, the government admitted twenty-eight priests and twenty-nine sisters from Spain, Colombia, and Haiti. One church official went as far as to say that the "centralization of government authority makes certain things easier for us."

In fact, Cuba's history of socialism may contain benefits for the church's own program of social justice. In theory, the system was created for the common good, without leaving anyone behind. When asked what hopes he had for his priesthood, Adonis Gonzalez, a twenty-year-old seminarian in Santiago, replied: "I want to help the people live their faith better, so that they can improve the whole society."

Still, the church will need to be resourceful if it is to broaden its outreach. Distribution of the bishops' November pastoral was limited. Less than 10,000 copies per diocese were printed. But perhaps because of necessity, the Cuban church has grown adept at spreading the word. "*Inventamos algo*" or "we'll figure something out," is a phrase frequently employed by Cubans as they confront a difficulty, whether it be how to move the occupants of a broken-down Lada to their destination or how to make a single chicken stretch to feed a family of eight. Both the Cuban people and their pastors will need to exhibit such patience and resourcefulness long after the pope's visit. □

Thomas Garofalo *works with Catholic Relief Services. He has traveled widely in Latin America and recently visited Cuba.*

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SO WHAT'S CATHOLIC ABOUT IT?

The state of Catholic biblical scholarship

Luke Timothy Johnson

In what sense might biblical scholarship as practiced in North America these days be called "Catholic," or in what sense should it be Catholic? This century in particular invites such a meditation. From the mid-nineteenth century until *Divino afflante spiritu* in 1943, many would have regarded the term Roman Catholic biblical scholarship as oxymoronic; maybe it was Catholic, but was it really scholarship? Today, the term Roman Catholic biblical scholarship sounds equally strange; it's scholarship, all right, and of an impressively high order, but what's Roman Catholic about it?

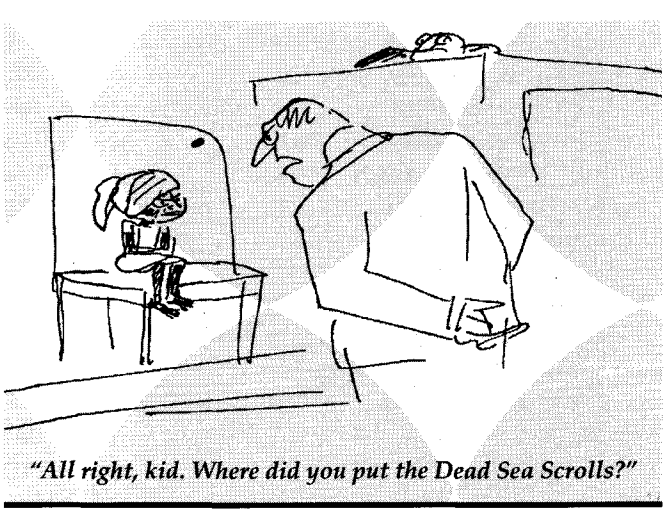
Indeed, the indistinguishability of Catholic scholarship has been a matter of some pride as pioneering figures moved from the margins to the heart of academic respectability, symbolized by the embrace of the "historical-critical method"—an approach that not only sought the "historical" meaning of the text but also considered historical reconstruction as the main point of studying the Bible. Biblical studies exemplified ecumenicity because the historical-critical approach ensured neutrality, objectivity, and lack of sectarian bias in interpretation.

I was born the year Pius XII's *Divino afflante spiritu* was issued, was a minor seminarian in the Tridentine mode, was a Benedictine novice before Vatican II who still remembers the sonorities and silliness of Gregory the Great's *Moralia* in Latin. Lured to the study of the New Testament in the monastery, I extravagantly admired Barnabas Ahern and Bruce Vawter and John McKenzie, and cheered the breakthroughs of Roland Murphy and Raymond Brown and Joseph Fitzmyer. I entered the thoroughly non-Catholic Ph.D. program in New Testament at Yale as a monk and since have taught in a state university department of religious studies and at two Protestant seminaries.

On the basis of my past twenty years in such settings, and from the perspective—perhaps idiosyncratic—of that experience, more and more these days I ask myself whether the dramatic change in Catholic biblical scholarship has been entirely positive. Let us grant that the triumph of historical criticism among Catholic scholars was a great victory, but is it also only a partial victory? Have we perhaps lost as much as we have won by so wholeheartedly and uncritically changing the character of biblical study? And if so, how do we go about recovering our loss, without relinquishing that hard-won victory?

Sounds like a midlife sort of question. Or perhaps the question of a third-generation immigrant. You remember the classic sequence: the first generation holds onto old country ways in order to maintain identity; the second generation is embarrassed by the old language, old manners, old food, and seeks complete assimilation into the new world; the third generation, realizing what it has lost and sensing that the next generation will have even less, tries to remember how those old recipes went. They don't want to go back to Italy or Mexico, but they worry about their children's future in a world that has nothing Italian or Chicano about it.

When Catholic scholars fought for assimilation into a scholarship dominated by the historical-critical approach, they did not perhaps realize four things that we are now better able to appreciate. First, what was called a method was in fact a model—not only a way of getting at the original voice of the text, but a paradigm with its own specific logic and limitations. Second, this model promised more than it could deliver. Third, it claimed exclusive ownership of academic respectability. Fourth, it was not neutral but carried with it the specific theological presuppositions—which get spelled out in terms of certain mental reflexes—of the Protestantism from which it had derived, presuppositions that tend to get expressed in terms of either/or.



"All right, kid. Where did you put the Dead Sea Scrolls?"

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The study of the parables, for example, came down to this: Did Jesus say it or not? In such research the "historical method" seeks more than what the stories might have meant in the symbolic world of the first century, although the method uses such linguistic and social knowledge. From first to last, the inquiry aimed at historical reconstruction: determining the earliest version of the respective parables and the course of their development, as well as drawing conclusions concerning the "historical" (that is, authentic) Jesus as opposed to the portrayal of him in the church's tradition, first of all in the Gospel narratives themselves.

I suggest that, having secured this much sanity, Catholic scholars might be healthy enough to consider another look at their own rich tradition of polyvalent interpretation. Catholicism, I propose, ought to be comfortable with biblical texts having multiple meanings.

Fundamental to the exercise was the premise that "the church" (as found in the Gospels) could and must be distinguished from the original teaching of Jesus. Thus, the "Parable of the Sower" in Mark 4:1-9 is taken to be from Jesus, whereas the allegorical "interpretation of the parable" in Mark 4:13-20 is considered to be from the early church. The purportedly literary distinction between a parable (with only one point) and an allegory (with many points) became an ironclad criterion for distinguishing Jesus from the tradition. Not only is it assumed that parables are better than allegories, but that the teaching of the historical Jesus was more authoritative than the understanding of his teaching embedded in the Gospel narratives.

It is not difficult to recognize in this approach the unspoken but clear implication that the church, already in the Gospels, betrayed Jesus' words, and that allegory in the Gospels is the first step in a disastrous history of interpretation from which history alone can rescue readers. Parable versus allegory thus stands as paradigmatic: either Jesus or tradition. History is the instrument of the either/or, that separates the authentic from the counterfeit, the original from the copy, the pristine primitive from the corrupted development. Because history alone can accomplish such discrimination, it alone is criticism's legitimate instrument.

I do not want to deny the power of either/or. Only a fool would slight the enormous growth in real knowledge generated by these presuppositions. All biblical scholars are indebted to the historical-critical approach. None of us with any sense of the alternative would want to relinquish such gains or abandon what is productive in that perspective.

At the same time it must be acknowledged that in the broadest sense, the historical-critical method has failed to deliver what it seemed to promise: it has not and cannot supply a scientifically verifiable alternative version of earliest Christianity or of "the historical Jesus." In addition to falling short of its own goal, by claiming scholarly legitimacy solely for itself, the historical approach has failed to encourage the practice of other modes of critical inquiry into the Scriptures. Interpretive practices of the tradition such as typology and allegory are scorned as "precritical," and the elevation of history over every other epistemology distorts the very meaning of "critical."

It is precisely at this point that I think Catholic scholarship can make a crucial contribution to the next generation of scholars, but only if what is distinctively Catholic in sensibility is not abandoned by those still able to summon it. By no means am I suggesting a turn away from the spirit of ecumenism and a return to triumphalism. Nor am I proposing a definition of this particular guild that would in any fashion marginalize the participation of the Protestant and Jewish colleagues who in recent years have done so much to enlarge and enrich its conversations. Rather, I appeal to an understanding of ecumenism that celebrates the special gifts that each religious tradition might offer to other traditions.

In this spirit, what is properly "catholic" about Catholic biblical scholarship, I propose, is to be found in the conviction that critical scholarship is not simply a matter of separating and opposing, but also a matter of testing and reconnecting.

A PURE GOSPEL?

In the either/or perspective that has dominated the study of Christian origins, the New Testament is set apart from what precedes it and what follows it. Jonathan Z. Smith (in *Drudgery Divine*) has brilliantly illuminated the way in which the study of Christian origins has been shaped by Protestant—above all Lutheran—theological presuppositions. Christianity's development into Catholicism is seen as a decline, the corruption of the pure gospel by a recrudescence of Jewish influence (in structure and law) and pagan culture (in the sacraments).

It was this commitment to the notion of a "pure gospel," of a moment of revelation so uniquely untouched by any human influence that it is self-validatingly from God, that required a purging of the dross from the New Testament writings themselves. Thus the impulse to find the "historical Jesus," not as a human person of the past as complex and unknowable as any other historical person, but as a fixed source of the good news (even if it ends up being a bit pedestrian) untouched by the corruptions of the church. Thus also (using many of the same criteria) the need to distinguish the authentic Paul from the inauthentic Paul, so that the sacred moment of origins can be distinguished from the corruptions of a profane development.

It is always either/or rather than both/and: not the ways in which Jesus' sayings gained greater clarity or significance

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Michelle Moore

Surviving in Sand

California, 1992

I knelt to watch where shoreline merged
with the pitch and plunge of ocean—
you seemed a god, the taproot of creation
and the waves' stanzaic thrum.

Beneath your hands the sand appeared
to gather and beg shape,
each sump and runnel mended and amended
then shored up by the bondstones

of devotion. This much can be said:
we are always building monuments
with the grit of bones and gravel,
the sediment of former definition,

of cliffs and columns called back down
like the harsh tidings of heaven,
the hardwater of metamorphics,
which could explain how you had come to be

there, composing in sand, a lonely god
at play, each small-scale vision
given to the moon's disposition,
another dawning lost on the ocean's tongue.

through their transmission and literary deployment, but only how they were distorted and obscured; not the ways in which Paul's perceptions were deepened by Ephesians, but only how they were dimmed.

Real history, however, is always a matter of both/and. There are new developments, but every historical origin bears in itself, and passes on, elements of what preceded and helped create it. To fixate only on the moment of origins is to be driven by theological rather than historiographical concerns. Proper historiography, I think, should be concerned with all the ways in which the old and new intermingle. If history offers lessons, one of them might be the inevitability of such admixture. And despite the recent renewal of the historical Jesus search—a pure example of theology driving history past its competence—there are encouraging signs that the defensive either/or posture in the study of Christian origins is being modified in the direction of the both/and.

Concerning the historical study of the world that shaped the New Testament, Catholic scholarship should be open to discovering all the ways in which both Judaism and Hellenism pervade earliest Christianity. There is certainly no theological motivation for suppressing that influence. The truth of Christianity does not need to be secured by denying all truth or beauty elsewhere. There is every reason to celebrate God's capacity for self-revelation to both Jews and pagans. These traces of God's work are the surest pledge that God is also capable of revealing Godself to Christians. The affirmation of elements both of continuity and distinctiveness is congenial to Catholic historiography and Catholic theological instincts.

Catholic New Testament scholarship can also, in turn, embrace church history. The isolation of the study of the New Testament from that of subsequent Christian life and literature is as little intelligible to a Catholic sensibility as the botanist's neglect of oaks in favor of acorns. From a Catholic perspective, there is no historical or theological reason to consider the development of Christianity into the patristic period as a decline or corruption, and every reason to regard it as an organic growth out of the same complex factors of culture and religious experience as those which generated the New Testament itself, and therefore deserving of the same attention. From a Catholic perspective the study of the New Testament should be preoccupied not only with the world that produced the New Testament but equally with the world that the New Testament itself produced. Anyone who has worked seriously with patristic and medieval scriptural interpretation, for example, knows that it cannot simply be dismissed as aberrant; even at the level of the *sensus literalis*, one can gain at least as much insight from Bede as from the average recent homiletic commentary. But I am suggesting a more fundamental enlargement of vision, to include all the ways in which Scripture was actualized in the prayers, sermons, and spiritual teachings of the patristic and medieval church.

Why should the scholar trained in the discipline of New Testament studies not leave this up to colleagues in other fields? One reason is that those trained in the first century milieu are able to establish a conversation between the New Testament text and its later uses that respects the differences between the first and subsequent centuries in a way that the patristic authors themselves did not. The second reason is that discovering how a text has been understood reveals also how a text can be understood, and therefore might have been understood—not only by fourth-century commentators but also by Paul and James and their first readers.

LOYALTY & CRITICISM

The story of criticism's emergence has consistently been couched in terms of a struggle for freedom of inquiry against the constraints placed by tradition. The choice was thought to be clear: on one side, dogma, tradition, law, sacraments, and miracles (or if you prefer, superstitions ancient and modern); on the other side, free and critical inquiry as found in the historical method. Nineteenth-century German scholarship drew this equation so clearly that it is small wonder the Roman Catholic hierarchy suspected the historical-critical paradigm.

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In hindsight, the repressive actions taken by Roman authorities against specific scholars still appear as morally reprehensible, as do analogous rumblings and sputterings and fulminations and sometimes worse today. At the intellectual level, however, their instincts were perhaps not entirely wrong. We are all familiar with the way in which the introduction to the New Testament for young college students begins with the premise that what students learned in church was mostly wrong. Even if not intellectually convinced, students must adopt (at least for the purpose of passing the course) a set of so-called "critical views" that are often an alternative set of dogmas, only ones approved by the academy.

The result is an academic study of the Bible that is ever more removed from the concerns of communities for whom the texts of the Bible have existential significance, and ever more responsive to the expectations of an academy that is not merely secular but actively antireligious in character.

As Stanley Hauerwas has wittily observed (in *Unleashing the Scriptures*), the pope has always known what Stanley Fish has recently discovered. The reading of texts is always in substantial measure shaped by the premises and practices of a reading community. No scholarship is utterly disinterested. All scholarship is both socially located and ideologically committed. Two important consequences follow. First, it is mandatory for scholars to know and to declare their loyalties. Second, it is essential to expand the notion of critical inquiry beyond the realm of the merely historical critical. I think that Catholic scholars today are well positioned to undertake these tasks.

Loyalty to the church's teaching and practices is no more contrary to the free exercise of the intelligence than is loyalty to the norms of the academy; loyalty is not the opposite of criticism but the condition for genuine criticism. Loyalty (or, if you will, faith) does not demand the sacrifice of the intellect to any one rendering (even any one authoritative rendering) of the tradition. It does demand the affirmation of that tradition as the starting point of any inquiry; it does require the most careful attention to authoritative renderings of that tradition; and it does ask that the task of criticism take place within the conversation of the community for whom the tradition has deep and existential import and that the critic participate in the tradition's embodied practices. The advantage for Catholic scholars is that, despite the alarms and confusions of recent decades, the Catholic tradition remains sufficiently coherent to command such loyalty. Criticism still has something to address, and does not yet have to bear the burden of replacing a living tradition.

Once one grants that development is not necessarily decline, that God's revelation takes place in the church's tradition as well as in Scripture, that God can lead the community into an ever deeper understanding of faith, then history becomes an increasingly inadequate instrument of criticism. It is by no means an accident or grievous misunderstanding that, as the historical-critical method gained its freedom to be truly what it wanted to be, it came to be seen as having less and less interesting or useful things to say by those still committed to discourse within the tradition. The Catholic intellectual tradition has continued to understand that criticism has theological, philosophical, moral, and aesthetic dimensions that are at least as important as the historical. I am by no means advocating reading historical criticism out of the conversation. Engaging the "historical" or "literal" meaning of the text is necessary for the responsible reading of Scripture, just as the attempt to accurately identify the historical realities of earliest Christianity is an invaluable element in any debate over Christian identity. But the historical moment does not exhaust the process of criticism. The faith community's debate over its identity and action should involve multiple critical perspectives.

RESPONSIBLE READING

One of the more bizarre manifestations of the either/or impulse has been the literary dismemberment of the Bible. In the name of history, compositions are chopped into sources, and these sources, like specimens on a slide, are sliced into ever finer layers of redaction. And like some home laboratory experiment in cloning, these textual samples are used to reconstruct the putative histories of hypothetical communities. Small wonder if casual observers sometimes wondered what biblical studies had to do with the actual Bible.

The literary sensitivity gained (not least by Catholic scholars) through contact with contemporary literary criticism and through the rediscovery of classical rhetoric has gone a long way toward recovering some sense of the biblical compositions in their literary integrity. It is a sign of renewed sanity to hear discussions about the "voice of compositions" and the need to hear the "diverse voices of compositions within the canon," even if those conversations have not yet made significant progress toward translating this literary gain into theological usefulness. But at least in some circles, it is again possible to talk about the literal meaning of the text with the shared understanding that such meaning must take into account a composition's literary integrity and literary form.

I suggest that, having secured this much sanity, Catholic scholars might be healthy enough to consider another look at their own rich tradition of polyvalent interpretation. Catholicism, I propose, ought to be comfortable with biblical texts having multiple meanings.

The necessity of securing a single, historically fixed, meaning of a text by means of exegesis is, after all, a function of that either/or known as the principle of *sola scriptura*. Catholicism—and Luther was surely right in this—is closer to Judaism than it is to Protestantism in this important respect. As an observant Jewish community is structured by *halakah*, so is Catholicism. And as Jewish scholars are freed by their strong identity formation to engage Torah *haggadically*, that is, not only as a collection of rules but above all as a source

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of wisdom, so are Catholic biblical scholars freed to engage Scripture in a variety of imaginative ways as a source of transforming wisdom. Jewish scholars would not, I think, admit the legitimacy of a choice between *halakah* and *haggadah*, for these modes of interpretation are mutually dependent yet serve distinct functions. So a Catholic scholar might resist the choice between either the literal meaning or the allegorical, for the Catholic scholar likewise would recognize that these modes of interpretation are mutually dependent and serve distinct functions.

Rather than a "right" reading of the text, therefore, we properly look for "responsible" readings, by which we mean interpretations that are both responsible to the text and responsible to the community of readers that is the church. Understood this way, the literal sense of the text is the indispensable instrument of discernment and decision making in the community of faith, and historical criticism continues to play an indispensable role in maintaining the "otherness" of the text that protects it from manipulation.

But not every reading of the text within the church is for deciding *halakah*. Much reading is for wisdom and delight. In such reading above all, the community as well as individual readers can enter into the imaginative world constructed not by this composition alone or that one, but by all the voices in the Bible and all the voices of faith that have also lived within the world imagined by the Bible. Allegory may no longer be to our taste, although we would be foolish (even as scholars) to declare we have nothing to learn from such brilliant readers as Origen and Augustine. Can our minds and hearts not still profit from the delicate interplay of literal, moral, spiritual, and ecclesial dimensions of the "Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard" (Matt 20:1-16) found in Origen's *Commentary on Matthew*? Indeed, I wonder whether the purposeful playfulness found in some postmodernist readings of the Bible might not rightly claim a share in the noble heritage of allegory.

I am not certain how much of what I called at the start a midlife reflection is really only my personal midlife reflection, or how much I alone am the third-generation immigrant who senses as much loss as gain in the new world so recently won. But if I am not being merely nostalgic, while not wanting to go back we need to find some new ways forward, ways into a new millennium that have deep roots within the past twenty centuries of the Catholic tradition. □

SCREEN

Richard Alleva

ROBERT DUVALL'S TRIUMPH

'The Apostle'

Most of the noble monstrosities of moviemaking—Griffith's *Intolerance*, Gance's *Napoleon*, von Stroheim's *Greed*, Branagh's *Hamlet*—have been the work of actors or ex-actors. So it comes as no surprise that a film as amazing and as frustrating as *The Apostle* is the work of Robert Duvall, who wrote, directed, and financed it, and in the title role gives the greatest performance of his career.

He plays "Sonny" Dewey, a Pentecostal preacher in Texas, a man as unshaken in his faith as he is unstable in his moods. On stage, leading white, black, and Hispanic congregations in prayer, Dewey bellows, sings, stomps, dances, claps, whirls, *performs*. He has the charisma of Mick Jagger and the raw-throat power of Joe Cocker, and about as much sexual restraint as your average rock star on the road. Yet he's no fraud; he really believes he is literally opening the gates of heaven to those who hear him. But, sick of his infidelities, Sonny's wife takes a younger preacher to her bed and worse—*much* worse from Sonny's point of view—she conspires to get her husband evicted from his own congregation. In a fit of rage, Sonny slams his son's baseball bat against his rival's skull, then flees under an assumed name, "Apostle." The rest of the movie recounts the fugitive's effort to create a new congregation in Louisiana, an undertaking that meets with success just before the law closes in.

The Apostle has a genial, open-air look and a vibrant, forward-thrusting rhythm, yet possesses dark undertones. Most Americans with religious convictions feel there is nothing incompatible between their beliefs and their civic existences. But this isn't the way of Sonny Dewey. The man is daemonic (which,of course, is much different from demonic). The surges of sensuality that drive him to adultery also drive him to the lusty worship of God. His rage for salvation isn't plainly distinct from the rage that prompts him to crack a man's head open. When he keeps vigil outside the house where his wife is sleeping with her lover and toys with a loaded revolver, this minister hasn't forgotten God: he is talking to God, grumbling against God, egging God on to do something about his misery. "I don't know who's been fooling me—you or the devil. I'm *mad* at you, Lord."

Even after he builds a new life and congregation for himself, there remains something turbid and maniacal in Sonny's conduct. When a young troublemaker, for no apparent reason (a redneck angel sent to wrestle with a latter-day Jacob?) enters the new church and makes racial slurs about the integrated assembly, Sonny faces the intruder calmly. But when the tough threatens to shatter the preacher's organization, he is doing the same thing physically as Sonny's wife did organizationally, and Sonny's response becomes, once again, violent. In a second confrontation, Dewey wins the youth over with prayer in a scene surely meant to show the cli-

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mactic triumph of Sonny over the darkness in his nature. Yet, as staged, there's a very fine line in this preacher between evangelical strength and gross, muscular force. Sonny's hand, so powerfully holding the back of the intruder's neck to keep him kneeling, could just as easily snap that neck. (But Duvall the director is having fun, too: featuring a local disc jockey giving a blow-by-blow description of how Sonny is working on the sinner, this may be the funniest conversion since Bill Walker was wrestled to salvation by the Salvation Army in *Major Barbara*.)

More disturbing still is the way Sonny works out his own salvation. Does he surrender to the police after assaulting his wife's lover or even after learning that his victim has died? No. He realizes that he has sinned, but how can he let himself be jailed when God is not through with him as a free-ranging minister? So he becomes a fugitive of God, not a fugitive from God. For Sonny Dewey, being law-abiding has little to do with working the will of the Lord. We all know that Caesar and God are often opposed, as witness the civil disobedience of Christians during the Vietnam War. But it's one thing to acknowledge this and quite another to countenance a hero who walks away from his crime and its lawful punishment so as to continue preaching. Is Sonny being absolutely sincere, or is there an element of self-deceit and willfulness in his nature? On this question, the film is fascinatingly ambiguous.

But it isn't just the content of *The Apostle* that disturbs but also its execution. There is a stylistic fissure in this movie and that is what makes it so maddening. The early sequences are powerful psychological drama, but most of the second half veers into documentary with its extraordinary recreation of Pentecostal worship. I was grateful for being taken into a world so foreign to everything I've known, but I also felt frustrated that Duvall, having established a character worthy of Flannery O'Connor, allowed the portrayal to be overwhelmed by documentarian verisimilitude. It's as if *Wise Blood* suddenly turned, midnarrative, into a PBS "*Frontline*" report on

fundamentalism.

That said, I must also admit that the Pentecostal scenes are gripping, exhilarating, bacchic. They pound into us more thrillingly than any rock concert could. Sequence after sequence literally and figuratively sings: children chanting the names of the Old Testament books as they help to refurbish a church; the ecstasy on a black child's face when a rusty trumpet is blown during a service; another child windmilling his arms in joy as he hears the grown-ups testify.

And Duvall is a formidable director of actors. As the wife, Farrah Fawcett, who has grown ever more real as the years have aged her away from Angelhood, makes Sonny's betrayals of her visible in her face. Billy Bob Thornton, as the troublemaker, turns a too-schematic role into a believably disturbed young man. Rick Dial, a nonprofessional playing practically the same guy he did in *Sling Blade*, is again instantly and tenaciously likable. Most startling is the way the flamboyant British actress Miranda Richardson subdues herself to the role of Toosie, Sonny's second love, creating a woman both fluttery and firm, nonplussed and flattered by her suitor's ardor but strong enough to take a clear look at the turbulence beneath that ardor. At a preview screening, Texas-born Horton Foote (who wrote Duvall's *Tender Mercies*) mistook Richardson for a nonprofessional from Texas, so precise yet unfussy is her performance. But there are a bunch of unprofessionals in this movie, and Duvall coaxes all into an utterly convincing group portrait.

But make no mistake about which performance will rule your memory once you leave the theater. If Director Duvall's devotion to naturalism rather undermines the dramatic articulation of his story, Actor Duvall's mastery of naturalism keeps Sonny Dewey's fate a living issue in our minds, no matter how thickly the documentary details crowd. His sixty-six-year-old body may have thickened with age, but Duvall has kept it supple enough to make Sonny a dervish on the religious platform, while his voice is an instrument that can harangue, caress, bark, wail, or simply bang. Some of the mannerisms we've seen before: the cockily waggling head from *Lonesome Dove*, the bowlegged strut from *Apocalypse Now*, the shy suitor's gaze masking inner fire from *Tender Mercies*. But it doesn't matter. Like Michael Caine, Duvall knows how to recombine his tics and flourishes so as to create a man we've never seen before. And when that bland face is shadowed by jealousy or glows with faith, we know that the actor has conceived of Sonny Dewey as a temple where spirits assemble: furious spirits who urge murder and beneficient spirits who forgive and embrace. And all these spirits must dwell together forever.

Let nothing I've written keep you from seeing this movie. There is nothing quite like *The Apostle* in the history of American film. □

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Stranded between cultures

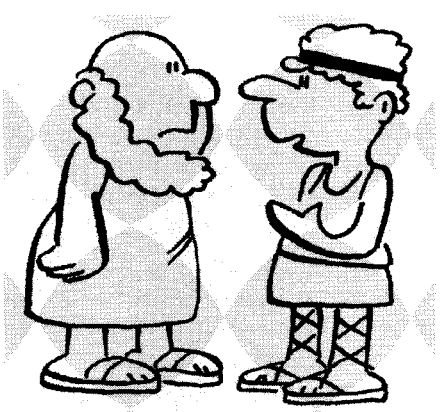
The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down
A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures
Anne Fadiman
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $24, 339 pp.

Robert Coles

Repeatedly, in spoken and written word, Margaret Mead complained of a certain ironic provinciality among anthropologists: they wander the world in search of people to observe—the more obscure the tribe, the better—yet studiously avoid taking a look at their own home territory, the way their fellow citizens live. Not that, one suspects, Mead would rejoice at the kind of scrutiny some of us in America get these days from certain social scientists, who have a way of burying their "subjects" (speaking of irony) in a dense, dreary, jargon-filled language, stripping them of their complexity and ambiguity, turning them into reductive caricatures of themselves, mere excuses, finally, for one or another pretentious theory. Still, a scholar who had roamed far-away continents in search of human variation, and who had tried hard to describe what she saw clearly as well as cogently, had realized the limitations of her own profession, even as she knew full-well how hard it can be for journalists, those other full-time witnesses of cultural conflict, to find the time and the publishing mandate to do thorough justice to what they get to see.

Some writers, though, have done exceedingly well at taking in one or another human scene, then conveying it to others—James Agee, for instance, in his justly celebrated, idiosyncratic *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, and George Orwell in his humble but provocative effort to understand the coal miners of midlands England (*The Road to Wigan Pier*), to name two examples of twentieth-century literary journalism, of documentary inquiry. It is in such company that Anne Fadiman's writing belongs. She found the time to observe closely and at substantial length, as the subtitle of her first book tells us, "a Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures." But wisely she went further, studied an Asian people's beliefs, their values, their recent social and political history—so that she tells us not only about an epileptic child and her parents, who were continually misunderstood by their American doctors, but about the way all of us, in our various ways, are apt to see others through the sometimes distorting lens of our own learned assumptions.

We learn in a preface that during the spring of 1988 the author first came to Merced, California, where many Hmong families had settled—a long voyage, indeed, for those mountain families of Northern Laos who had been caught in the terrible war that spread across what used to be called, collectively, French Indo-China, and that did so much harm to so many in the 1960s and 1970s. She wanted to investigate "some strange misunderstandings going on at the county hospital between its Hmong patients and its medical staff."



"The way I see it, Socrates, a false premise is better than no premise at all."

There she met the Lees, whose epileptic daughter so challenged her American physicians, even as her parents also frustrated and confounded and sometimes enraged them. There she met, listened to, learned from a wide range of other individuals: the various doctors who attended the Lees, tried to persuade them, win them over, and who finally took them on as opponents; and as well, nurses and social workers and Hmong relatives, neighbors, friends — in sum, the many men and women who made up two communities quite apart philosophically and spiritually, despite their proximity and their shared connection to a child whose epilepsy (and its consequences) would eventually take away much of her humanity (her consciousness and willfulness as they shape a normal life). For the doctors, for us who are at heart materialists of the industrial West, such an outcome had a neurophysiological, a biochemical explanation; for the Lees and their kinfolk the "illness" was metaphysical, a kind of spiritual abandonment or malaise (*gang dab peg*) wherein "the spirit catches you and you fall down" (hence the book's title: a soul on the loose, so to speak, makes for the vulnerability of its one-time possessor). In a sense, the Lees worried not about their daughter's epilepsy, but about her spiritual condition, her hurt soulfulness, it may be said, even as one earnest pediatrician after another tried to medicate a child regarded as neurologically impaired. Under such circumstances, inevitably, "what the doctors

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viewed as clinical efficiency the Hmong viewed as frosty arrogance."

It is to this book's considerable credit that the dignity of the Hmong is not purchased at the expense of the American doctors who earnestly worked with the Lees, and who constantly had to experience the behavioral consequences of their fears and suspicions. The author almost miraculously sustains an empathy that embraces all the characters who, one by one, appear in what is, really, a documentary narrative, which offers descriptions of events, evocations of mood and feeling, forays into the history and culture of a people, accounts of myths, beliefs, ceremonial practices. Well into this book one begins to take to each of its protagonists—as if absorbed in the magical momentum of a powerfully summoning fiction. We are spared abstract categorization, theoretical insistence, in favor of the sidelong insights of storytelling.

No wonder when I came to a chapter titled "Why Did They Pick Merced?" I thought of Raymond Carver's short stories: like his master and hero, Chekhov, he was always posing questions whose answers were less factual than fateful—the ultimate authority of chance and circumstance in all of our lives. That is what Anne Fadiman has managed to give us—lots of "cross-cultural perspective," as the phrase goes, lots of medical anthropology, but most compellingly and instructively, an account of certain lives as they quite improbably came together, with all the consequent and subsequent times of perplexity, confusion, misunderstanding. Needless to say, this tale offers no happy outcome—unless it be what happens to the reader of a persuasively rendered moral fable: a recognition of the blind spots which, in their many versions, variations, afflict and threaten us all, and with such awareness, of course, a sense of gratitude to the giver of such a gift, in this instance a talented young American writer who knowingly takes us far afield in the course of her California medical inquiry. □

Robert Coles *is a child psychiatrist, and the author, most recently, of* Doing Documentary Work.

GIMME SHELTERS

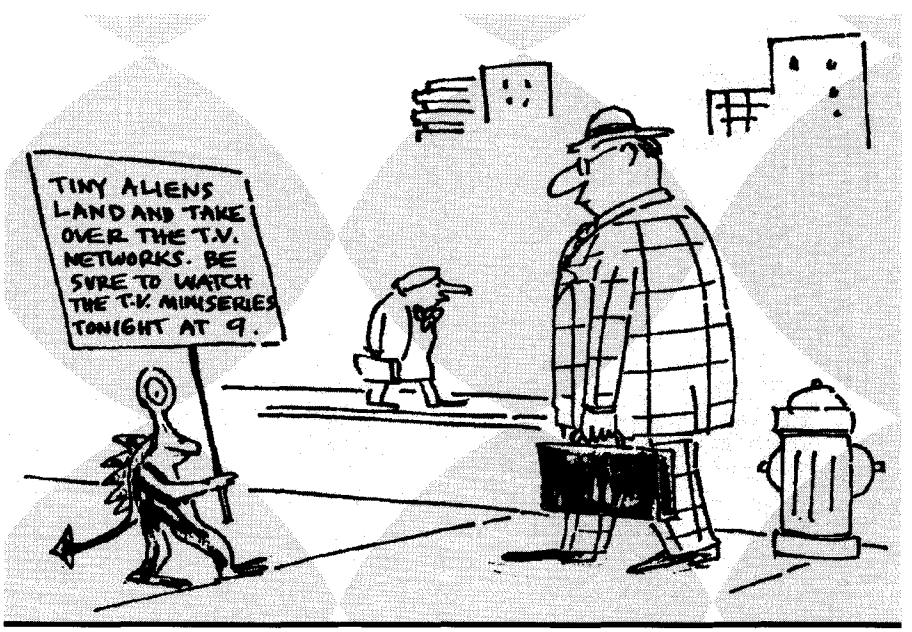
Dr. Strangelove's America
Society and Culture in the Atomic Age
Margot A. Henrikson
University of California Press, $34.95, 392 pp.

Christian Appy

On July 22, 1957, air-raid sirens pierced the early morning calm of Schenectady, New York. The horrible wail signaled residents to evacuate their homes and head for civil defense shelters. A nuclear war might already have begun. But only one family responded. Everyone else rolled over and went back to sleep. The somnolent citizens were suffering from "atomic apathy." Or they rejected the crazy idea that you could defend yourself against a nuclear bomb. Or they were just tired. In any case, their inaction proved harmless—the rude awakening was a false alarm.

On September 29, 1961, in another American town, a radio report interrupted Doc Stockton's surprise party. Radar had detected UFOs that looked like missiles and everyone was urged to seek cover. Doc said a hurried goodbye to his friendly neighbors and hustled his wife and boy into their family bomb shelter. The evicted guests began to panic. Ill-prepared for Armageddon, they begged the good doctor to share his bunker. He adamantly refused. There was only enough food for one family. Tempers flared and the neighbors procured a battering ram. Fortunately, before blood could spill, the radio announced an all-clear. The UFOs were merely satellites. Worry not—we "just crossed over. . . into the Twilight Zone." Doc Stockton was an episode from Rod Serling's land of "shadow and substance" that filled the television airwaves from 1959 to 1964.

Margot Henrikson, a history professor at the University of Hawaii, establishes temporary headquarters in many fictional dimensions like Serling's. While she occasionally returns to actual places like Schenectady, *Dr. Strangelove's America* is mostly an analysis of Hollywood movies (some five dozen!), novels (two dozen), and an assortment of television shows, plays, paintings, songs, and poems from the late 1940s to the early 1960s (with a final chapter venturing to-



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ward the early 1970s). Henrikson's loaded footlocker of a book—full of clippings and plot summaries—addresses a truly fascinating question: How was American culture shaped by "the bomb" during the early years of the cold war?

Henrikson believes nuclear weapons were critical to the formation of a "culture of dissent" that posed fundamental challenges to cold war orthodoxy. Stated this way, the thesis strikes me as perfectly plausible, even banal. It is not very surprising to learn there was extensive cultural discourse about nuclear dangers long before Jonathan Schell's *Fate of the Earth* (1982). What makes the book less convincing than it might be is the limited way the author handles the fictional materials that dominate her conception of "culture." If we are to believe there was significant cultural dissent to the "atomic corruption of American power," we need to know more about both the nonfiction culture and the real "atomic system"—the construction, testing, deployment and use (real and threatened) of nuclear weapons. After all, as Henrikson indicates, *Dr. Strangelove* is a subversive film in large part because it comes so close to the marrow of high-minded nuclear strategy. General "Buck Turgidson," the movie's bomb-happy warrior, quotes Herman Kahn's *On Thermonuclear War* (1960).

Henrikson's cultural analysis is most suggestive when she addresses the postwar preoccupation with madness, family breakdown, and violence. She locates countless representations of a schizoid America torn between anxiety and apathy, violence and passivity, rebellion and obedience. Here she is less determined to claim nuclear dissent; it is sufficient that the culture "matched" the violence and "split" nature of the bomb.

Schizoid may not be too strong a word to describe a culture in which teachers taught schoolchildren that America was God's gift to humankind—Democracy Triumphant—and then ordered them to hide under their desks to prepare for nuclear war; a culture that was busy preparing with equal fervor for backyard barbecues and World War III; a culture in which Ike played 800 rounds of golf while his secretary of state threatened "massive retaliation."

Here Henrikson's work complements a richer, more probing analysis of the cold war, Tom Engelhardt's *The End of Victory Culture* (Basic Books, 1995). Engelhardt argues that nuclear weapons transformed American culture not only because they generated dissent, or fueled cultural madness, but because they made it impossible to tell convincing war stories about a wholly virtuous and victorious America. In a nuclear world, victors and vanquished were always threatening to merge. For Engelhardt, the cold war created a strangely "storyless" realm.

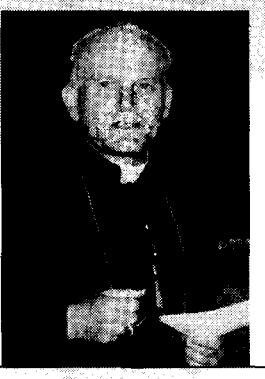
Despite her great catalogue of films and books about America's sorry "mental health," Henrikson too often pushes her materials through a kind of atomic strainer to separate out the radioactive isotopes. One example of this method appears in her analysis of the famous murder in Hitchcock's *Psycho*. To her, the scene "recalled the terms and language of the civil defense warnings

KAROL WOJTYŁA

The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II

Rocco Buttiglione

Foreword by Michael Novak



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about being 'virtually naked' to enemy attack, about avoiding the 'deadly shower' of radioactive fallout." Allow me to hazard an alternative interpretation. When I first watched *Psycho* as a teenager, I was pretty sure Janet Leigh was completely naked and nuclear fallout was the last danger I had in mind; Norman Bates was scary enough.

However much Henrikson exposes herself to the charge of atomic reductionism, she is also rather, well, disarming. For instance, she claims that 'film noir, sci-fi, and writers like J.D. Salinger and Allen Ginsberg urged people "to fight for their humanity and to feel the pain and panic appropriate to the nuclear age." But elsewhere she concedes that these promptings had little effect, that the 1950s was a time of general complacency and prosperity, a time when most Americans were much like the sleepy people of Schenectady, apparently unconcerned about the threat of nuclear war.

But this concedes too much. For a book so alert to the subversive potential of popular culture, it is surprisingly inattentive to the actual political dissent that preceded the 1960s. We aren't even told about those parents who sent their children's baby teeth to the dissident scientists at the Committee for Nuclear Information to help them document the presence of Strontium 90 in American milk (thus establishing additional grounds for opposition to nuclear testing).

Only with the '60s do we get a fuller treatment of political dissent. In perhaps the best chapter of the book we learn about the public rejection of the "bomb-shelter craze." In 1961, in the midst of the Berlin crisis, Kennedy called upon Americans to construct family fallout shelters. The public balked. Henrikson argues that public "apathy" toward civil defense, along with the "panic" dramatized by Rod Serling's drama, were galvanized into a political objection to shelters, nuclear brinksmanship, and atomic escalation. This dissent led Congress to slash the civil defense budget in 1962 (even after the Cuban missile crisis), and pushed Kennedy toward a nuclear test-ban treaty with the Soviets.

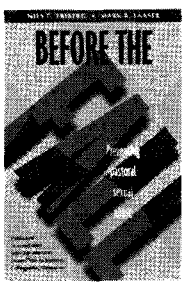
One further consideration should inform our efforts to interpret the meaning of nuclear weapons in cold war culture. For all the "limited wars" that were a continual product of the global conflict, along with the memory of 60 million dead in World War II, many Americans remained strikingly immune to the horror of war and secretly attracted to its real and imaged excitement. Henrikson does not sufficiently explore the degree to which Americans found fantasies of nuclear war thrilling as well as scary. As Walker Percy put it in a line she quotes from *The Moviegoer*: "What people really fear is not that the bomb will fall but that the bomb will not fall." That, along with fear, anxiety, and apathy, is surely an important component of Dr. Strangelove's America. □

Christian Appy *teaches history at MIT and edits a book series on "Culture, Politics, and the Cold War" for the University of Massachusetts Press.*

NEW TITLES

From the Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute

Before the Fall
Preventing Pastoral Sexual Abuse
Nils C. Friberg and Mark R. Laaser



This important study answers the question: What can be done while people are preparing for ministry to reeducate or redirect them in order to prevent abuse?

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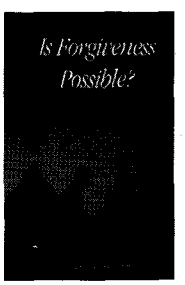
Is Forgiveness Possible?
Joan Mueller, O.S.F.



Forgiveness is essential to Christian life and holiness, yet in some instances forgiveness may seem impossible. Based on the Lucan "prayers of forgiveness", *Is Forgiveness Possible?* explores the theological foundations of such dilemmas.

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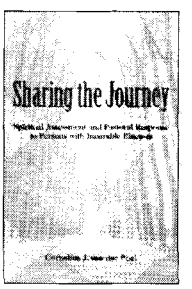
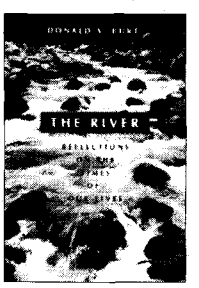


Sharing the Journey offers insights into the needs of those with an incurable illness, suggests ways to evaluate a patient's needs, and provides guidelines for those who accompany the patient on the journey toward union with God.

2394-8 Paper, 104 pp., 5 3/8 x 8 1/4, $9.95

The River
Reflections on the Times of Our Lives
Donald X. Burt, O.S.A.



The River reflects on the flow of human life based on Augustine's colorful analogy of life as a river that begins in the heavens as a stream (infancy) and flows across a broad plateau (mature years) before plunging over a great falls (death) into the eternity beyond. It points out the stages on our journey as well as what we can learn along the way.

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HELPING THE TWAIN TO MEET

The Roots of Christian Mysticism
Olivier Clément, introduction by Jean-Claude Barreau
New City Press, $19.95, 380 pp.

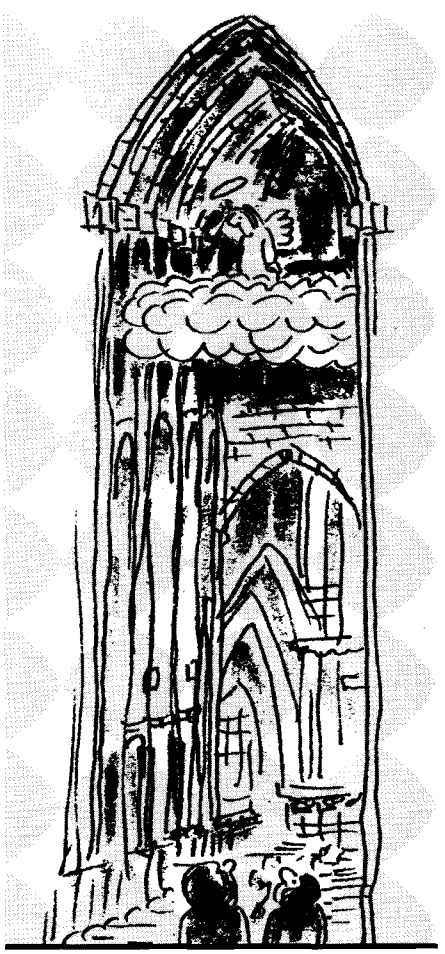
Harold Isbell

I began this book very conscious of the historically divergent traditions of East and West. After all, the Roman Catholic church in which I have lived and Orthodoxy have been separated for nearly a thousand years. For me, encountering a religious tradition seemingly so close to my own yet innocent of both the scholastic method and the Council of Trent, is to say the least, a bit disorienting. And yet, as Olivier Clément so elegantly demonstrates, our beginnings are the same and as conscious as we may be of our differences, the incontrovertible fact remains that we have the same communion of faith and sacraments.

Clément is an Orthodox theologian who teaches at the Institute of Saint Sergius in Paris. His primary premise is stated very simply in the introduction by Jean-Claude Barreau: "Christianity is in the first place an Oriental religion, and it is a mystical religion." From a close reading of patristic texts, primarily the Greek fathers but including Ambrose, Augustine, and Benedict, Clément argues that the God who is by nature unknowable most mysteriously offers himself to be known by human beings.

The book opens with a carefully presented reminder that we live in an abiding awareness of personal mortality and finitude. Always desiring certainty and permanence, we are compelled to read the harsh facts of our existential limits not only in our own being but in everything around us. Clément quotes Augustine—a passage from the "Commentary on Psalm 121"—which echoes and expands upon the familiar opening of *The Confessions*: "Our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they rest in Thee." And this rest in God represents the evangelical vocation to be "perfect as the Father is perfect" and to "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart and whole soul and your neighbor as yourself."

The book opens with a very careful analysis, an exercise in nonscholastic dogmatic theology, of the inseparable dogmas concerning the Trinity, creation, the Incarnation, and finally the nature and vocation of all humanity in the Resurrection. A hidden God is always a distant God, but the Christian God's single, unchanging nature is also a trinity of persons, boundlessly creative and generative, a continuing burst of transcendence. Correspondingly, Clément notes, in every life there is the persistent call to change, to a *metanoia* so radically transformative that it may well begin with a lightning bolt on the high road. With such a spiritual change comes a renewed awareness that sees with the wisdom, the passion, even the erotic fury that is the Spirit with and within us.



While Christian mysticism requires a strong foundation in Scripture, Clément reminds us that a full spirituality also looks to the ready manifestation of God's being and nature in the facts of creation. Gerard Manley Hopkins put it so succinctly and with wonderful sensuality, "God's Grandeur...will flame out, like shining from shook foil."

A significant consideration in Clément's argument is the reality of human freedom. For anything like a mystical union to occur, the individual must first freely acquiesce in confidence and humility. The grace of contemplation is always a gift freely given and freely embraced. The wonder of mystical union is the wonder of divine freedom and human freedom coming together. To enter such a state requires from the individual the greatest degree of trust and self-knowledge. In such a situation, there will exist a wholesome and creative fear of the Lord, not a Lord who sits as a fiercely avenging judge, but a Lord who insistently invites the creature to enjoy the feast prepared.

Clément makes much of the fact that it is in the church that the fullest and richest contact is made with God. In the life of the sacraments, the individual finds nurture and support so that the consciousness of one person is shaped and enriched by the consciousness of all. Such an awareness of mutual dependence takes one well beyond an understanding of the church as a set of rules and regulations. Rather, the church becomes the vehicle, the means, by which the individual is transformed and sanctified.

Discussing the nature of prayer, Clément quotes Evagrius of Pontus: "Prayer is the daughter of gentleness....Prayer is the fruit of joy and gratitude." In other words, prayer exists as the product of silence and waiting, as a statement of reality observed with care and devotion,

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or in the words of Evagrius: "If you want to pray, you need God, who gives prayer to one who prays." Lacking the ability to take even the first step, we must have the grace to pray before we can pray, so that salvation comes by our own love and humility formed and moved by the creative impetus of grace.

Clément concludes the book with two appendices. The first is a series of biographical notes on the individual patristic authors cited and quoted; the second is a series of three essays on Arianism, Monophysitism, and early monasticism. Since today's reader might very well need a guide through the period and the subject, these pieces are a valuable adjunct to the book itself.

In an era which hopes for a closer union between the Eastern and Western church, the elements of difference must be seen not as barriers but as attractive qualities that will lead all of us to a closer union in the experience of our common faith. It seems to me that a principal vehicle for that greater union is to be found in the wonderfully rich tradition of mysticism shared by both East and West. □

Harold Isbell's *translation of* Ovid: Heroides *is available from Penguin Books. He lives in San Francisco.*

RELIGION BOOKNOTES

Lawrence S. Cunningham

I usually find it difficult to read books on theology and ecology. Most of them seem predictable in their theological approaches are sentimental or hortatory in style. Northcott's book, by contrast, is a sober volume that manages to do two things quite well. First, he surveys recent writing on religion and ecology by constructing a useful set of categories: humanocentric views of ecology (of whom the most famous exponent would be John Paul II); theocentric views (for example, Jürgen Moltmann); and ecocentric orientations (Matthew Fox; Sallie McFague; John Cobb). Each of these visions of the relationship of religion to ecology is subject to fair criticism. Northcott, for example, judges the pope as "limited" because John Paul relies too heavily on an account of natural law which cannot give due balance to the moral significance or the moral goods of the natural created order. According to Northcott, this reading of the natural law, most systematically represented by John Finnis and Germain Grisez, does not do justice to the medieval view of natural law either. On this point, I agree with the *Tablet* reviewer who wrote that Northcott would have benefited from reading some revisionist Thomists.

The Environment and Christian Ethics
by Michael S. Northcott
Cambridge University Press, $21.95, 379 pp.

Northcott goes on to set out his own vision of ecological theology. The ecological crisis derives, he writes, from a breakdown in moral purposiveness and the demise of social justice. Thus, the ecological crisis is not an isolated problem. Its solution requires a recovery of a sense of justice and of the common good. Toward that end, in some very rich pages, Northcott recommends the resources of the biblical tradition. He proposes that we embrace a renewed sense of the Hebrew vision of the created order as well as the Christian understanding of the Trinitarian creator and incarnate redeemer. To those classical biblical doctrines he adds a "thickened" view of natural law which, he argues, is manifest not only in the West but in several sources of Eastern thought.

I especially liked Northcott's reflections on the Hebrew account of creation. Instead of focusing on the "domination" model (a cliché since Lynn White's essay in 1967), he insists on the ordering of creation and, further, on the implication of the covenant. I was also impressed by his trinitarian approach to theology since it shifts (as Moltmann and others have insisted) away from monistic ontologies toward a vision of the outpouring Trinity where, at least in the formulation coming from Irenaeus, there is a "ground for differentiation of self and other, of the many and the one, for the diversity of human and nonhuman life, and for the embodied and material life in the cosmos, including the order of human life." Finally, Northcott is to be commended for his attention to the role of the church in this issue. In other words, to his sophisticated reading of current moral theory and theology, he also brings a pastoral concern for the world which has come to us from God as "good."

Restless is the operative word in the title of Beumer's book. The late Henri Nouwen was born in Holland, ordained a priest for the diocese of Utrecht, did advanced work in theological studies in Rome, psychology at the Menninger Institute in Kansas, and, after a stint teaching in Holland, in the psychology department at Notre Dame. Later he held a professorship at the Yale Divinity School. His spiritual searching would lead him to a stay at a Trappist monastery in New York, an unhappy period at Harvard, extended visits to Latin America, and finally to the L'Arche community in Toronto, where he served as chaplain.

Henri Nouwen: A Restless Seeking for God
by Jurjean Beumer
Crossroad, $19.95, 190 pp.

Beumer shrewdly notes that Nouwen left Holland before the seismic changes in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. As a consequence, he was able to reflect on contemporary Christian spirituality with a sort of anguished confidence but without having had personal experience of disappearing theological faculties, emptying parishes, and "virulent re-

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ligious indifference" in his native country. His vocation was not to speak to the indifferent; he searched to deepen spiritual experience within the context of supporting communities, thus providing his writing, as the author says, with a certain graceful quality.

Nouwen was one of the most popular spiritual writers of our time. His writing combined a testimony of personal vulnerability, deep reading of the gospel, compassion for the poor, and a sense of what touched people most deeply. If Nouwen had a fault it was that he was afflicted with a kind of *furor scribendi* which led him to publish too much with too many reworkings of the same material. What he did best was to touch on real problems—fear, anxiety, death. Only time will tell if some of his books have staying power.

Beumer was a long-time friend of Nouwen who knows the Dutch scene well. A Protestant theologian, his most penetrating comments are often found in his extended footnotes. This work is very much a loving tribute to a dear friend and a great Christian. What we still need is a much thicker critical biography. For now we have a gracefully written first introduction to Nouwen's life. The book provides a bibliography of Nouwen's work in English, but no index.

I called Rolheiser's book my "automobile volume," which is to say that it was tucked away in my car so I could pick it up while waiting, for example, for my daughter to get out of school for the day. The book consists of brief meditations, first published, as far as I can determine, in Canadian and British Catholic newspapers.

Against an Infinite Horizon: The Finger of God in Our Everyday Lives
by Ronald Rolheiser
Crossroad, $14.95, 179 pp.

These meditations are a felicitous blend of scriptural reflection, shrewd psychological observations, and generous portions of letters sent to Rolheiser and his responses. Rolheiser is widely read in theology, literature, spiritual writing, poetry, and psychology. He possesses a rare combination of authentic piety, lack of pretension, and a real concern for the problems of real people. He engages, without pontification, people who have lost children or those on the verge of marriage or coping with illness or addictions. He is a listener. Even when he is uncomfortable with what he hears, he is eager to offer support.

Rolheiser organizes his short essays under twelve large headings ranging from the presence of God in creation through sections on the moral life, family situations, the sacramental life of the church, the relationship of sacraments to social justice, and to the life of prayer. Especially good are his reflections on imagination and the Christian life. Tolkien's remark to C. S. Lewis when the latter was on the cusp of religious conversion serves as a starting point: Your reluctance, Tolkein said to Lewis, " to understand [the mysteries of faith] comes from a failure of the imagination." Rolheiser speaks of the "paschal imagination" in which we can envision the death of the old as a prelude for the birth of the new. His applications of that insight would give everyone food for thought, especially his notion, to which I fully subscribe, that what often passes for lack of faith is really lack of imagination.

This book could well be used by the homilist or the retreatant or those who simply have a bit of time waiting for the school bell to ring. Oh yes, I hope Father Rolheiser, who thanked his Oblate community in two different places, did not feel offended by being turned into a Franciscan on the back cover of his book. He is an OMI not an OFM, but one could imagine him either!

It has been long known that the rosary developed from the custom of substituting prayer formulas (first the *Pater;* then the *Ave*) for the 150 psalms sung by the literate monks in their monastic choir.

Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages
by Anne Winston-Allen
Pennsylvania State University Press, $28.50, 210 pp.

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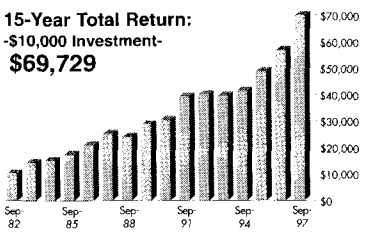

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It was the "psalter" for the mostly illiterate lay brothers. How this practice developed in tandem with meditations on the mysteries of the life of Jesus and his mother is a far more complex question. Even more complex is how this practice came to be called a "rosary," even though the mystical significance of the rose is a commonplace in medieval culture.

It is the burden of Winston-Allen's tightly argued book to provide answers to these questions. Already in the nineteenth century, a Bollandist scholar proved that the identification of the rosary with Saint Dominic was false; that the rosary should have been attributed to a fifteenth-century Carthusian of the same name. Subsequently, in 1977, an earlier rosary text was founded datable to *circa* 1300. Winston-Allen investigates the extant vernacular literature, picture books, and artistic iconography to disentangle the long history of the development of the rosary and its enormous popularity as a devotional device on the eve of the Reformation. By a careful, indeed somewhat tedious examination of these sources, she develops some interesting observations about the relationship of prayer to visual texts and their ritual use.

What interested me most was the author's argument that the development of the rosary and rosary confraternities was linked to church reform on the eve of the Reformation. Rosary devotions and literature cognate to that devotion had close links to the observant orders like the Carthusians, to many lay-centered pious associations, and to the mendicants with their struggles against the hegemony of the secular clergy. While these devotional impulses had their abuses and superstitions (like hiring poor people to say the rosary on behalf of the rich, who might then accumulate indulgences), they were also a vehicle for genuine spiritual fervor and devotion. Winston-Allen is also quite good, if somewhat rushed, in her discussion of how the term "rose" and its derivatives were linked to the most loved biblical book of medieval spirituality: The Song of Songs.

Winston-Allen's book should be seen in the light of recent work by Eamonn Duffy, among others, who examine "popular" religion in a new and sympathetic light. Such investigations are a response to those scholars, most conspicuously Etienne Delaruelle, who see late-medieval religion as a farrago of externalism, superstition, and quasi-magic. Apart from those discussions, anyone interested in the history of spirituality and/or Marian studies will find this a useful text.

Winston-Allen's work is one of history. But it did make me wish that someone would reflect on the changing place of the rosary in the contemporary church. It seems not to be popular in the lives of my undergraduates here at Our Lady's university, but there is still a coterie who are there, beads in hand, praying at the grotto. How did they get the rosary tradition?

Cecilia Ferrazzi not only prayed the rosary but, according to her autobiographical testimony, made before the Venetian Inquisition in the midseventeenth century, Our Lady of the Rosary

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Autobiography of an Aspiring Saint
translated and edited by Anne Jacobson Schutte
University of Chicago Press, $14.95, 101 pp.

appeared to her. Anne Schutte, a professor of history at the University of Virginia, found, transcribed, and translated this fascinating document which consists of a series of interrogations that Ferrazzi underwent after being charged with feigning sanctity. Ferrazzi was a laywoman who belonged to an amorphous movement of women who were not nuns but who lived a life of seclusion from the world, engaged in prayer and good works. She came to the attention of the Inquisition because of her purported visions, miracles, and extravagant prayer life, as well as attempts to harbor and raise the illegitimate children of prostitutes. Church officials were dubious about any ill-educated woman who claimed such religious authority. This autobiography is a window into the world of religious practice quite removed from that of the cloister and the theological *studium*.

Ferrazzi's autobiography, on the face of it, is a loose narrative about running to confessors, convents, pious confraternities, of illnesses, purported cures, extraordinary graces, and so on. In Schutte's hands, thanks to her informative introduction and ample notes, it is also a revelation about a whole range of historical material about which people have opinions but no facts. Schutte argues, with a number of other scholars, against the "black legend" of the Inquisition, stating that the Inquisition's methods guaranteed the best legal proceedings to be found in early modern Europe; that the use of torture was rare; and execution rarer still. One could appeal an inquisitorial judgment, as Ferrazzi herself did. Schutte's presentation of the translated text also tells us a good deal about the practice of medicine (primitive and dangerous), social relationships, the myriad practices of popular religion, and Tridentine sacramental practice (the issue of frequent Communion, for example, is a key theme in this treatise).

This brief book is part of a series ("The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe"), to which the editors, Margaret King and Albert Rabil, provide a general introduction as a prelude to Schutte's introduction and translation. The book ends with some appendices listing the *dramatis personae* mentioned in the transcript, as well as the place names. In addition, there is a fine bibliography and an adequate index. Tidy and user-friendly, this volume would be a valuable, inexpensive text for courses in gender studies, or for a study of traditional religious practices. Individual readers interested in the history of the church and its practices will also find it worthwhile. The general editors list ten other titles in the series. We can only hope that they reach the quality of this one.

The essays collected in *Practicing Our Faith* derive from a seminar organized by Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass to inquire into the practices of Christians who live within various religious communities. This is not a book about spirituality for the individual, but a con-

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Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People
edited by Dorothy Bass
Jossey-Bass, $22.50, 232 pp.

sideration of how spiritual practices give shape to, sustain, and identify believing communities. It is a study, in short, of spiritual formation.

A number of essays focus on scripturally warranted community practices, such as honoring the body, the right use of goods, the character of Christian witness, asceticism, and the practice of hospitality. Reflections on contemporary Sabbath-keeping, discernment, forgiveness, healing, dying well, and the place of music and singing are also included. Generally, the essays are well written and informative. There are wonderfully instructive patches in these nontechnical essays. I took notes, for example, on the very nice linkage made between the Hispanic custom of the Christmas *posada* (shelter) and the need for sheltering the poor, and the equal need to think of the church as a hospitable community. I also learned the meaning of the Quaker word "cumber," which points to all the material baggage which distracts and burdens a person.

These small insights do not exhaust the range or nourishment of this collection. The stated goal of the editors was to provide a matrix out of which people could speak about enhancing practices in the Christian community while keeping them close to the liturgy. The final chapter consists of a series of hints and questions to extend what has already been covered. Curiously enough, the kinds of questions and experiments that the editors suggest are examples of the kind of discernment described in an earlier essay. In that sense, each essay sheds light on others.

A brief bibliographical excursus is provided for each of the chapters, as well as a scriptural and topical index. I also very much liked the brief excerpts from various writers adorning the pages of the essays. Here is a favorite (from the poet Wendell Berry): "The breath of God is only one of the divine gifts that make us living souls; the other is dust. Most of our modern troubles come from our misunderstanding and misevaluation of this dust."

This book would be wonderful for parish discussion groups. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

["Catholic Women's Colleges," November 21], Abigail McCarthy has made several errors, one of which is serious enough to warrant this letter. Ms. McCarthy praises our colleges for their innovative spirit. Our innovations stem from the mission statements which direct our institutions in creative and purposeful ways.

The mission of SMWC is threefold: We are a Catholic college, a liberal arts college, and a women's college. Any program added to our curriculum must be connected with that mission. Thus the bizarre and utterly incorrect reference to "a program for air-traffic controllers" would not be a likely choice unless we could substantiate how it serves our mission.

A college adds programs to serve its students. Because we are a women's college, we added an external degree for women in 1973 and a residential student mothers' program with a day-care center in 1990. We've had a stable and riding horses since 1927, but we now boast the Mari Hulman George School of Equine Studies. We have a scholarship athletics program because of our commitment to student athletes; we have created a master's program in Earth Literacy because of our commitment to justice toward the Earth as well as its inhabitants. Every professional degree is built on the foundation of the liberal arts.

Our 67-acre (not 1,600-acre) campus is singularly beautiful. We are surrounded by the 1,200 acres of the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Providence. To speak of us as "compensating for our relatively isolated location" fails to note that we are four miles northwest of Terre Haute, a city of 102,000—small, but certainly not isolated .

BARBARA DOHERTY, S.P.
Saint Mary of the Woods, Ind.
The writer is president of the college.

The writer replies:

Sister Doherty's difference is not so much with me as with the presenters at the Trinity College Conference on Catholic Women's Colleges. They reported on the Lilly Project at Yale—a study of colleges founded by women religious. She was evidently not at the conference and did not hear the director of the Lilly Project, Dr. Tracy Schier (incidentally, a Saint Mary-of-the-Woods alumna), report on the innovations at Saint Mary's, complete with references to the external degrees, the earth literacy program on the 1,600-acre [*sic*] campus, etc.

Before sending in my column I double-checked my notes with the Lilly Project's chief historian, Dr. Cynthia Russett, who deemed my report accurate. Neither she nor I apparently heard it clearly when Dr. Schier's list of Saint Mary's innovations segued into a mention of the air traffic controllers' program at Rivier College. I regret misapplying the program to Saint Mary's, but I am not sure that it was "bizarre." No doubt the sisters at Rivier thought it was consonant with their mission to help the erratically scheduled controllers get a college education, just as the sisters at Saint Mary's thought a program in equine studies was consonant with theirs.

I do want to make it clear that I would never intentionally do anything to diminish the reputation of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. (I do plead guilty to the phrase "relatively isolated" but it was not meant to be pejorative.) I have pleasant memories of speaking at the college and of a vacation with some of the sisters at a lake place they used. Sister Doherty will find that I cite Saint Mary's as a pioneer institution in Catholic women's education both in my report on these colleges for the Neylan Commission and in my chapter in the book, *Educating the Majority*, published by the

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American Council on Education.

ABIGAIL MCCARTHY

Unnamed heroines

Sidney Callahan makes passing reference to the history of women's orders in her "Nunsuch? Reviving Religious Communities" [December 5, 1997], but fails to mention the name of even one of the nuns who created this remarkable past. Still, in the end, she feels sure that "the church will be blessed with the survival and revival of religious vocations." She may be right, but the church could help this process along in a variety of ways. Let's begin the new year with a resolution in this regard. Why not make the names of Mary Frances Clarke, Katharine Drexel, Theresa Dudzik, Mary Kaupas, Catherine McAuley, Elizabeth Seton, and Mary Ward (to name just a few) as well known as that of Dorothy Day? As women's history flourishes, why not encourage our daughters, nieces, and students to become acquainted with the stories of those nuns who taught or nursed us? And, while we're at it, why not promise never to see another remake of *Sister Act* or *Late Nite Catechism*?

SUELLEN HOY

Notre Dame, Ind.

The writer is on the faculty of the history department at the University of Notre Dame.

McCarraher bites back

You people on Riverside Drive didn't show me your own responses to my "Starbucks" piece, so I felt a little ambushed when I read the introduction to "Smile When You Say, 'Starbucks'" [November 21]. Since I don't take it as a slap, I'll reply rather than turn the other cheek.

1. Yes, I'm under forty.

2. "Over the top rhetorically." OH YEAH? SO WHAT?

3. "Deconstruction" is a word people are throwing around carelessly these days. I'm not a fan (or not much of a fan) of Derrida, De Man, and other honorary members of the Yale English department. But if it's "deconstruction" to ask historically informed questions about the way people identify themselves—in this case, as "laity"—then I guess I'm unashamedly guilty.

4. "Learned about Catholicism in graduate school." I learned about Catholicism from my beloved parents, from the nuns and priests of Saint Joseph's Parish in Downingtown, Pennsylvania—and from graduate school. It was in graduate school that I first read theology seriously, where I read religious, cultural, and intellectual history, and where I took my "frame of interpretation," not only from historians (certainly not the most pious bunch you'd ever want to meet), but from Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas, and John Milbank. I contribute to *Commonweal* precisely because, as David O'Brien put it in his response, I "really care about the Catholic tradition and its promise."

5. I'm neither "free" nor "innocent" of the quarrels over pre- and post-Vatican II Catholicism. As a historian, I can't afford to be ignorant of the many legitimate reasons that many postwar Catholics decided that the brick-and-mortar church was a failure. Moreover, we're *all* post-Vatican II now; we're all scrambling to figure out what it means to be faithful after the bricks and mortar of the preconciliar church have been demolished by the tremors, not only of *aggiornamento*, but of the broader history of modern America. If I have an "apostolate"—one of those preconciliar words I wish would come back into vogue—part of it is to chart those tremors and determine their size, strength, source, and direction.

6. I'm coming to believe that "American compromise" is a phrase that should be given a permanent vacation. It obscures more than clarifies the historical and theological dilemmas posed for Catholicism by American culture. There's a sense in which the church always has and always will "accommodate" or "adapt to" America. My questions would be: Accommodate to *whose* America? To *which* America?

Okay, that's it. It's back to my Dunkin' Donuts and coffee. Pax Christi.

EUGENE MCCARRAHER

Villanova, Pa.

P.S. You really should respond to Richard John Neuhaus's dumping on your new digs in a recent issue of *First Things*. For a magazine that serves, in effect, as the religious supplement of the *Wall Street Journal* (complete, on occasion, with advertising from *Forbes*), *First Things* has a lot of nerve dissing you and your Protestant neighbors on Riverside.

From the editors: You said it.

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SOMETHING IN HER VOICE

Stephen Lyons

When I call Rose, who is at her mother's on this dark winter evening for her visitation week, I can hear something wrong in my daughter's voice. An emotional quality that a phone cannot disguise. A trouble that needs to escape and come home. She is also irritable and short with me, wishing this conversation would end.

"What's wrong, sweetie?" I ask, in my most welcoming tone, desperately not wanting her to hang up.

And then suddenly it is freed. "Keith Jensen committed suicide today. He tied a rope to his bedroom door and jumped off his bed."

A long pause. Now we are connected. "School was weird. There are so many rumors. We sat in small groups in Mrs. Spence's English class and tried to talk about it. Some of the kids were crying because the last words they said to him were, 'Shut up Keith!'

"No one could do any work. I flunked my math test." I look outside the kitchen window at the drifts of heavy snow. I am suddenly shivering, but not from the weather.

I ask Rose if she knew Keith well.

"Everybody knew him. He seemed happy. I never would have thought he would do something like this. I don't understand."

She talks on with emotion and without hesitation, as if she is the river and I am the ocean. I listen without interruption. Then, out of nowhere, my daughter says, "Don't worry, Papa, I would never do anything like that."

It's a long-standing tradition with us that when we are separated and we end our conversation that we each say "I love you." Tonight there is nothing automatic in our goodbyes.

I put down the receiver and get out the family album that holds class pictures for each of the last seven years. I find Keith with Rose in C. Anderson's third-grade class, and in Mrs. Strong's fourth-grade class. There is nothing in Keith's face that could forewarn what happened today; nothing to prepare any of us for the idea of a twelve-year-old going to elaborate measures to hang himself. He is smiling out at me along with the other children I have watched over the years: in the noisy playground at Russell Elementary School, on stage at the annual holiday concerts, and at my annual visits on Career Days to talk about writing.

That's when I remember Keith just for an instant, like a light drop of rain. He's at the edges of the classroom on one of the days I visited. I see him looking at me. I recall eyes and a smile. Maybe the dark brown color of his hair. And that is all I remember.

When I look at Keith's picture, I think of all the children I've known in my life. I remember how I've watched them grow. I remember the times I've teased them, held them, been shocked by their deaths, despaired as their parents split up to form new families. And I've been inspired by their bravery in the face of it all. I think of the connection they share with all the world's children and how their lives ripple through our community, affecting each and every one of us.

I continue turning the pages of the album to watch the lives of my daughter. I am driving a tractor raking fall oat straw in northern Michigan; I am balancing baby Rose on the hood of our ancient green truck at a Reno rest-stop; there are April tulips and Rose playing cello; and her mother holding her wrapped in a towel fresh from a bath, both of them radiant.

More pages: Rose with tricycles and summer Popsicles; twirling a dance, eyes closed, in the Western wind in a blue corduroy jumper and white tights; she is climbing trees and sniffing Northcoast rhododendrons. She walks under the half-light of a redwood forest holding my hand and dances with me, her feet on my own for balance. In every photograph her fingers are busy, her eyes twinkling, and her face reflects the light of each day.

A child's life, with my own intertwined, is held within the covers of this photo album. I can hold each picture and slip into a time frame of emotions. This is what I'm looking for tonight: a reckoning, a validation that the years just didn't pass without notice. I want to remember everything about my daughter. Photos are not easy to look at. Memories are never simple. I can't easily untangle the joy from the pain, and if I am to survive separation and divorce, I am forced to choose the better moments of our lives. What fine actors we ultimately must become.

All the rooms and houses stare back at me. Meals, friends, seasons, and landscapes of desert and rain. Precious fragments of field and wood. Mountain ranges I still climb at night in my bed. All the various Western towns where I tried to hold us together and failed. I guess these years are finally catching up with me.

I close the album. I am haunted tonight. I hear Rose's voice again. *Don't worry, Papa, I would never do anything like that*. I am holding still in this room, searching for faith with my own small remainder, affirming one child, remembering another. □

Stephen Lyons, *a writer, lives in Pullman, Washington.*

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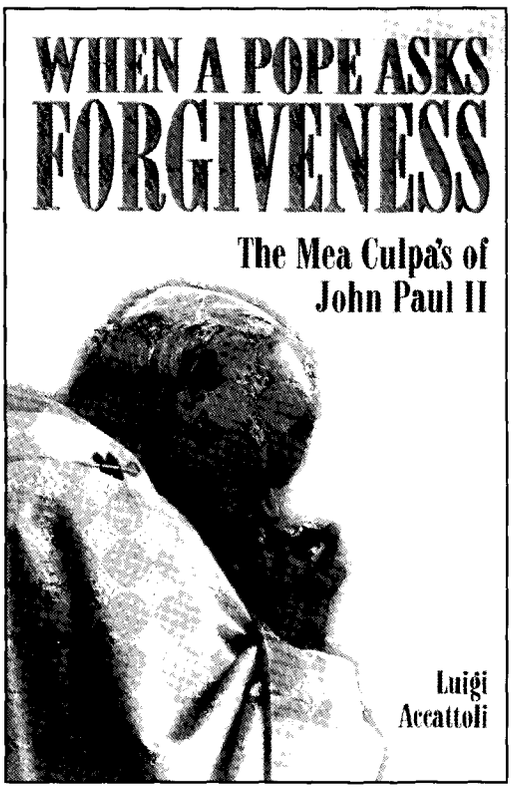

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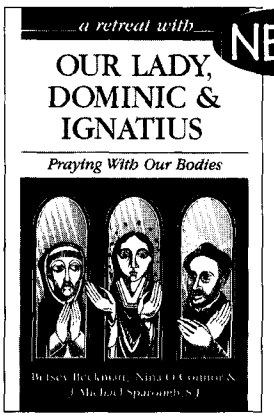

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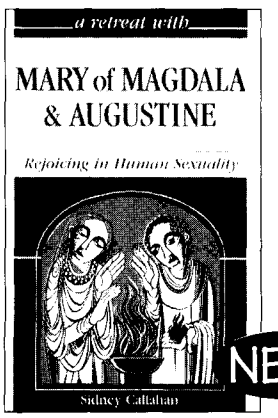

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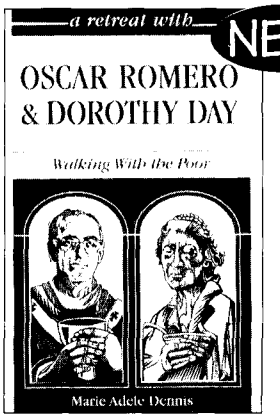

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